Politics and change in the Madras Presidency, 1884-1894.

A regional study of Indian Nationalism.

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to describe the process of political change in South India during the decade following the establishment of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in May 1884. Although the inchoate manifestations of early political consciousness could be traced to the 1830's when the Hindus protested against the proselytizing operations of the Christian missionaries and their official allies, a protest which during the early 'fifties crystallized to give birth to the Madras Native Association, it was not until the formation of the Madras Mahajana Sabha that political activity in South India found its organized and self-sustaining momentum. The thesis attempts to reconstruct the events that led to the establishment of the Madras Mahajana Sabha against the background of political convulsions caused partly by the unpopular rule of Grant Duff and partly by Anglo-Indian opposition to Ripon's policies. The ferment that these events produced also precipitated the foundation of the Congress in 1885, though no attempt is made here at any exhaustive discussion of the origins of this body. However, the impact of the Congress on Madras politics is examined in some detail, especially in the light of attempts by the local Congress leaders to unify within the aegis of this organization the various communal and factional groups in the Presidency.

The framework of political unity erected at the Madras

Congress of 1887, as the closing chapters attempt to show, largely collapsed under the weight of successive crises that overtook the Congress during the early 'nineties. If communal suspicions and separatist tendencies led to the withdrawal of the Eurasians, Muslims and Panchamas, controversies arising from the Cross Bill and the Age of Consent Bill estranged the conservative Hindus and divided the inner circle of the Congress leadership in Madras. The thesis ends by assessing briefly the impact of these divisive factors on the nationalist movement in South India.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

Add. MSS.	Additional Manuscripts in the British Museum
Eur. MSS.	European Manuscripts in the India Office Library
IHP	India Home Proceedings
JPP	Judicial and Public Papers
MJP	Madras Judicial Proceedings
MLP	Madras Legislative Proceedings
MPP	Madras Public Proceedings
MRP	Madras Revenue Proceedings
PPHC	Parliamentary Papers House of Commons
PPHL	Parliamentary Papers House of Lords

Chapter I

The Impact of Western Education

Contemporary observers witnessing the Indian political awakening during the closing decades of the nineteenth century tended to trace its origins to the new elements that British rule had introduced in the sub-continent. It was generally believed that western education was the most important, if not the decisive, factor in stirring political consciousness in India. 'Among other important factors', said Eardley Norton in 1888, 'the educational policy which the British Government had been steadily pursuing in this country has, to a very appreciable extent at all events, not only changed the order of things that existed under former dynasties, but have created a body of men who have been imbued with ambitions and aspirations which that very education had been instrumental in providing as a natural consequence.' [1]

The advent of a western-educated, modernizing intellectual elite in India was significant as much for its immediate dominance of certain grades of the administrative establishment as for its potential impact on the arena of Indian politics. Samuel Smith, a British parliamentarian who visited India in 1885, asserted that the emergence of this educated elite had introduced 'a totally new element' in the discussion of Indian problems as compared with former times. The products of a generation of university education, and congregating in growing numbers in the provincial capitals and the larger mofussil towns, it was 'this educated native tribunal' which began to scrutinize and judge British policy in India.

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1. The Hindu, 2 April 1888.

'An intelligent native public opinion and a free native Press', wrote Samuel Smith, 'are now judging the governing class, and its policy is viewed from a very different standpoint from that which the official Europeans and the British public are accustomed to take.'[1] As Smith was recording his impressions, the Indian National Congress was formally inaugurated in Bombay. The politics of agitation and protest had found its constitutional channel.

Indian protests against British policy, however, were neither a novelty nor a monopoly of any particular group. Since the British Raj was stabilized during the early decades of the nineteenth century, Indian protests assumed various manifestations, from the extensive insurrection of 1857-8 to the isolated and confused street clashes against the police. Such forms of protest, seeking redress by force of arms, represented no basic threat to the political or territorial integrity of the Raj. Technologically more advanced, militarily better equipped and disciplined, the Raj displayed both the capacity and the determination to quell such protests. The Revolt of 1857-8, despite the initial reverses, stamped the authority of the Raj more firmly over the sub-continent,[2] dissolving in the process the coalition of the ruling aristocracy and the landed gentry and emasculating the old political and religious elites. Rioting and street disorders, whether prompted by religious fanaticism or opposition to tax levies, were repressed with an equal degree of severity. In

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1. Samuel Smith, 'India Revisited', Contemporary Review, XLIX, June 1886, pp 797-8.

2. According to a recent writer, the British were able after the Revolt 'to dictate a settlement from a position of unquestioned mastery, and to enforce their will upon a subdued and chastened people.' Thomas R. Metcalf, The Aftermath of Revolt. India, 1857-1870, (Princeton, 1964) p ix.

South India, where such forms of protest were relatively rare, the sword invariably re-established order while the courts of law administered punishment. Thus, by the careful deployment of their military might, and by mercilessly crushing any disturbance, the British rulers left no doubts in the Indian mind as to the utter futility of resorting to arms to challenge the Raj.

To the western-educated elite in India, however, these modes of registering protest carried little appeal or conviction. Convinced of the overwhelming military might of the Raj, and painfully conscious of the deep divisions and dissensions within Indian society, the educated class was astute enough to recognize that an appeal to arms would only lead to disaster. 'Internal rebellion', said a Muslim civilian in 1887, 'is for the present out of the question. The great variety of races and various conflicting interests in India are a sufficient safeguard against any attempt at combination in the near future.'[1] More important, however, in influencing the new elite's thinking was its fascination with the western methods of political action. British parliamentary government, with its system of checks and balances and with a popular legislature supervising and overriding the executive, strongly appealed to an educated class becoming progressively disenchanted with the despotic and 'bureaucratic' Raj. Hence, in making protests against the Raj and its policies, the Indian elite resorted to the well-worn techniques of constitutional agitation which were as strongly imitative of British political behaviour as they were sharply divergent from past Indian methods.

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1. Proceedings of the Public Service Commission, V, Proceedings relating to the Madras Presidency (Including Coorg), Sec II, Evidence of Mir Shujaat Ali Khan, p 31.

Insurrection and mob-violence gave way to political associations, public meetings, resolutions and memorials. This constituted a new departure in the history of Indian political activity, and the 1880's represented the era when politics in Madras assumed, for the first time, an organized and self-sustaining momentum. To grasp the complexities of this phase of political activity, as well as the forces that gave it birth and largely shaped its course, it is important to trace in general terms the growth of western education in South India.

I

The sudden, and rather dramatic, appearance of the educated elite on the South Indian political scene during the 1880's should not obscure the gradual advance that western education had been making during the generation since the Mutiny. Indeed, the post-Mutiny period provides a striking contrast to the preceding one when education faltered in Madras as a result of official vacillations on the one hand and feuds between the advocates of secular and religious instruction on the other. As early as 1822, Governor Thomas Munro had called for an enquiry into the state of education in Madras and the survey revealed the defective character of the indigenous system, arising from the long years of anarchy and 'the ignorance of professed teachers and poverty of parents.' State intervention was regarded as the panacea, and the Munro scheme envisaged the establishment of a central normal school to train teachers, collectorate schools to impart superior education, and tahsildary schools to provide elementary instruction.[1] A Committee of Public Instruction

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1. PPHC, IX, 1831-2 (735-1), Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, pp 413-7.

was constituted in 1826 to implement the scheme, and after two years 14 collectorate schools and 81 tahsildary schools had sprung up in the different parts of the Presidency, imparting education to all classes through the medium of regional languages.

After a decade of experiment, Munro's scheme for organizing a comprehensive system of vernacular instruction was 'pronounced a failure', resulting in 1836 in the abolition of the schools and the dissolution of the Committee of Public Instruction.[1] Opposition to this scheme had come as much from the Court of Directors in England as from the champions of western education in India. The former, firmly wedded to the 'downward infiltration' theory, became persistent advocates of a system of instruction which would be western-oriented in content and directed mainly at the higher classes which possessed 'leisure and natural influence' over Indian society. The education of the higher classes, the Court told the Madras authorities in 1830, would 'eventually produce a much greater and more beneficial change in the ideas and feelings of the community, than you can hope to produce by acting directly upon the more numerous class.'[2] The other source of opposition to the Munro scheme came from the Anglicists, who were at this time waging a battle for western education against the champions of Oriental learning. With the Anglicists emerging triumphant in 1835, the Madras system of imparting vernacular instruction to a broad cross-section of Indian society was doomed. The

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1854-55, (Madras, 1855), p 2.

2. PPHC, IX, 1831-2 (735-1), p 385.

Madras authorities were ordered to concentrate their resources on maintaining a central college at the metropolis, which was to provide instruction in western science and literature through the medium of English.[1] Western education, directed principally at the higher classes, thus became the essential component in the system of state instruction in Madras.

If there had been any doubts in the official mind as to the wisdom of switching to the new policy, they were soon dispelled by the unequivocal attitude of the Indian leaders in Madras. In November 1839, a petition from the inhabitants of Madras, bearing nearly 70,000 signatures, strongly endorsed the principles embodied in the Resolution of 1835. Contending that intellectual advancement provided 'the true foundation of a Nation's prosperity', the memorialists urged the establishment of educational institutions in which 'the rising generation may attain instruction in European Literature, Science and Philosophy, as well as in our Native learning and languages.' Like the Court of Directors, the Madras petitioners were principally interested in 'the mental improvement of the upper classes', who, in their turn, were expected to diffuse their enlightenment 'amongst the inferior classes'. There was also a note of disappointment over recent official inaction, especially in the field of higher education. 'Where, amongst us,' lamented the Madras memorialists, 'are the College Institutions which founded on these generous objects, adorn the two Sister Presidencies?'[2]

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1. B.T. McCully, English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism, (New York, 1940), pp 35-7 & 119.

2. For text of the petition see Opening of the Madras University, on the 14th April 1841, (Madras, 1841), Appendix No.3.

The advent of Lord Elphinstone as Governor of Madras in 1837 provided the much-needed direction and impetus which western education was lacking in South India. The confusion that had reigned in Madras educational circles in recent years, and its consequent failure to keep pace with Bengal and Bombay, prompted Elphinstone into taking effective remedial measures. In a scheme that he drafted in December 1839, he proposed the setting up of a collegiate institution in Madras City, consisting of a college department to impart instruction in the higher branches of literature, philosophy and science, and a high school where more elementary courses would be provided on the above subjects and the regional languages. Admission was open to all classes and creeds, and care was to be taken not 'to violate or offend the religious feeling of any class' through doctrinal instruction.[1] The scheme found general acceptance, except among the Christian missionaries, and it was partially implemented in April 1841 when the High School of Madras University was formally inaugurated. Although the institution was launched under favourable auspices, Elphinstone's departure in 1842 exposed it to a long and acrimonious conflict between the advocates of secular and religious instruction.

A conflict of this nature had become inevitable in Madras ever since the Christian missions began to look increasingly towards education as an agency of conversion. South India was the earliest field of missionary endeavour in the sub-continent and it had also attracted the largest

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1. PPHC, XXXIV, 1845 (216), Copy of orders of the Government of India for the establishment of the Council of Education at Bengal and at the other Presidencies, pp 5-9.

share of evangelical enterprize, resulting by the middle of the nineteenth century in a vast network of mission stations, seminaries, schools and printing houses, embracing almost every district in the Presidency and even extending into the remote villages where the influence of the Raj was hardly preceptible.[1] In their efforts to win converts, the early missionaries offered 'earthly inducements', mastered the difficult Dravidian tongues, translated scriptures into regional languages, wrote popular tracts exposing the weaknesses of Indian religions and established vernacular schools to impart instruction at an elementary level. During periods of famine or pestilence, the missionaries provided aid to those in distress and a home to those children abandoned by their parents. Though these methods were in vogue throughout the eighteenth century, they had made little significant impression on the higher castes of Hindu society.[2]

However, 'a new era in the evangelization of Madras' began with the advent of the Free Church Mission of Scotland in 1837. Rejecting the old methods of proselytization, the Free Church Mission decided to attain its object exclusively through the agency of western education. A school was started in Black Town, the Indian quarter of Madras City, and regarded as 'the Sebastopol of Southern India, the citadel of Satan, the centre of caste, pride and Brahmanism',[3] while branch schools were also established

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1. For a contemporary survey of Christian missions in Madras, see J.Mullens, Missions in South India. Visited and Described, (London, 1854).

2. The Madras Native Herald, August 1861, p 60.

3. Ibid., p 60.

in Conjeeveram, Nellore, Chingleput and Triplicane. The task of destroying 'the giant of heathenism' by imparting western education 'on Christian principles' began auspiciously for the missionaries. In 1841, three high caste Hindu students embraced Christianity despite parental protests and threats from the champions of Hindu orthodoxy.[1]

It was precisely at this juncture, when the missionaries were tasting the first fruits of their new policy, that the Elphinstone scheme for state education came into operation. Besides its bias towards secular instruction, the scheme threatened to undermine the hegemony that the missions had thus far enjoyed in the field of education. Powerless to frustrate the establishment of the High School, the missionaries demanded the introduction of the Bible in its curriculum. Secular education was denounced as 'positively mischievous', tending 'only to make clever devils'.[2] In organizing a determined campaign against secular instruction, the missions enlisted the aid of a strong official faction in Madras.[3] The champions of secular education survived this fierce onslaught, partly on account of their own courage, but largely because of the determination of the Court of Directors to uphold the principle of religious neutrality.

If the assault on secular education failed, it did not deter the missionary faction from attempting to obstruct the progress of higher

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1. The Dawn in the East. Addresses by the Rev. P. Rajahgopaul, and the Rev. A. Venkataramiah, (Edinburgh, 1854), p iv.

2. G. Norton, Proselytism in India; The questions at issue examined; In a letter to Sir George Clerk, K.C.B. &c., (London, 1859), pp 18 & 44.

3. The missionary campaign, and its political repercussions, are discussed in Chapter II.

education in Madras. Proposals for the full implementation of the Elphinstone scheme, especially the establishment of a college branch and the opening of 'superior Provincial Schools' in the mofussil, were set aside despite repeated demands by the Board of Governors of Madras University and the availability of funds. Similarly, requests to prescribe educational tests for entry into the public service or concede preference to the 'proficients' of the High School were ignored. Moreover, the authority of the Board of Governors was weakened by the creation of a rival Council of Education, while vacancies in the former remained unfilled and at one stage the Board's strength had shrunk from fifteen to four. The Board itself was torn by a 'most violent schism';[1] and there was a continuous controversy 'as to the very first principles on which National Education in this Presidency ought to be founded.'[2] Consequently, the decade after Elphinstone's departure was almost entirely absorbed by these conflicts, and the educational endeavours of the state were largely confined to the maintenance of the High School. Indeed, as McCully says, Madras during the early 1850's was 'probably the most educationally backward of the existing four great administrative divisions of British India.'[3]

If much of the 1840's had been spent in educational controversies, the ensuing decade saw the gradual resolving of the points at issue and

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1. PPHL, III, 1852-3 (20), Second report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to inquire into the operation of the Act 3 & 4, c. 85, for the better Government of Her Majesty's Indian Territories, Evidence of G. Norton, 6 & 15 June 1853, pp 96-104.

2. The Educational Speeches of the Hon'ble John Bruce Norton, B.A., (Madras, 1866), p iii.

3. McCully, op.cit., p 159.

the assertion of the guide-lines of policy along which education should advance during the next generation. The publication of Wood's Despatch in 1854 and the issuing of the Queen's Proclamation in 1858 helped to settle conclusively the dispute between the champions of secular and religious instruction, and brought to an end the persistent missionary agitation for the introduction of Bible classes in state schools. The ill-feeling that this long and bitter controversy had engendered among the opposing factions gradually disappeared. Missionaries became reconciled to official policy, while there was less Indian suspicion as to the 'proselytizing tendencies' on the part of the government.[1] As peace was being restored in Madras, the Dispatch of 1854 provided the opportunity for re-organizing the structure of education in South India. In 1855, the Department of Public Instruction was constituted to provide the machinery for inspection and superintendence of the educational institutions in Madras.[2] The concept of the grants-in-aid, designed primarily to foster mass education, encouraged greater private endeavour in education. Missionary bodies initially, and Indian agencies subsequently, utilized the system to maintain a vast network of aided institutions throughout the Presidency. Moreover, the Dispatch envisaged the establishment of universities in the main Presidency capitals of India. In Madras, a college department had been functioning since 1853, and it became the nucleus of the Madras University that was inaugurated in 1857. The educational needs of the mofussil also elicited official attention.

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1. The Educational Speeches of the Hon'ble John Bruce Norton B.A., pp 94-8.

2. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1855-56, (Madras, 1856), p 2.

Provincial schools were started in Kumbaconam, Calicut and Bellary in 1854-5, while seven zillah schools sprung up in the other mofussil centres between 1853-8.[1] These institutions, as anticipated, became the nucleus of future colleges. Equally important in stimulating education was the decision to prescribe examinations for entry into the public service. The rules of the General Test were formulated and published in 1858,[2] and entry into public service henceforth became dependent upon passing of this examination. Western education, removed from the realm of controversy, re-organized on an efficient basis, and given the due rewards, was in a position to assert its hold over South India.

II

The table below indicates, in gross totals, the growth of western education in the Madras Presidency during the decades immediately after the Mutiny:

Year	1858-9	1865-6	1870-1	1875-6	1880-1	1885-6	1890-1
Students	21,001	45,056	115,212	284,480	327,808	455,837	644,164

Source: Report on Public Instruction, Madras, for relevant years.

Progress during the years 1859-66, despite the doubling in student numbers, was disappointing, partly owing to the financial dislocation caused by the Mutiny.[3] The next decade, however, was a period of buoyancy, with student

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1858-59, (Madras, 1859), Appendix A.

2. For copy of the rules, see Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1858-59, Appendix F.

3. T.R. Metcalf, op.cit., p 126.

population rising by six times. With increasing provincial funds being channelled into the grants-in-aid system, and local bodies assuming part of the burden of financing primary education under the Local Funds Act of 1871, education in Madras found the momentum that it had lacked in the earlier years. The famine of 1877-9 momentarily halted progress. Provincial sources were diverted to meet other pressing needs,[1] while the effects of the catastrophe emptied many class-rooms. However, by the mid-1880's, the impact of the famine was less evident, and education recovered some of its earlier buoyancy. Even the phased withdrawal of the state from direct management of higher and secondary education failed to stem the swelling tide of western education.

The following table illustrates the progress of education in the various districts of the Madras Presidency during the second half of the nineteenth century:

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1. Education Commission. Report by the Madras Provincial Committee; with evidence taken before the Committee, and memorials addressed to the Education Commission, (Calcutta, 1884), p 42.

Name of District	Population in 1881	1858-9	1865-6	1870-1	1875-6	1880-1	1885-6	1890-1
Ganjam	1,548,696	601	962	2,778	10,521	13,067	26,880	37,784
Vizagapatam	2,490,185	184	1,196	3,096	8,425	14,973	18,051	24,142
Godavary	1,792,866	2,700	2,317	4,713	12,827	21,787	23,279	32,255
Krishna	1,548,507	614	828	2,646	11,642	16,536	27,471	36,735
Bellary	1,340,337	459	904	4,274	10,875	12,036	13,480	18,911
Anantapur							5,472	8,024
Cuddapah	1,120,118	89	593	3,568	7,965	6,701	8,968	14,329
Kurnool	711,555	0	241	2,664	5,850	5,437	6,918	10,275
Nellore	1,220,335	508	2,155	5,225	8,175	10,196	10,319	21,836
Madras	406,117	3,430	8,893	17,490	22,835	23,650	28,238	34,948
Chingleput	985,554	1,837			16,185	14,329	17,047	24,724
South Arcot	1,815,151	645	1,149	5,907	19,612	15,302	23,141	32,189
North Arcot	1,817,561	706	2,111	5,997	16,171	16,642	21,154	37,906
Salem	1,599,427	328	650	4,346	7,517	9,316	14,901	23,171
Tanjore	2,140,585	1,114	3,404	7,714	19,873	29,125	39,410	47,670
Madura	2,167,381	498	2,021	8,079	16,168	20,971	33,702	42,506
Tinnevelly	1,700,910	5,566	8,441	11,048	34,336	34,863	43,814	53,130
Trichinopoly	1,519,306	121	1,172	2,744	7,562	10,786	21,555	24,728
Coimbatore	1,658,567	335	5,921	8,574	14,669	12,485	18,281	26,946
Nilgiris	90,633				908	1,534	1,923	2,938
Malabar	2,333,852	743	1,597	11,121	27,245	31,894	40,603	70,329
South Kanara	959,020	523	501	3,228	5,119	6,178	11,230	18,688
Total	30,966,663	21,001	45,056	115,212	284,480	327,808	455,837	644,164

Source: Report on Public Instruction, Madras, for relevant years.

Without a shadow of doubt, western education made its strongest initial impact on the Tamil-speaking areas. In 1859, the nine Tamil-majority districts, namely Madras City, Chingleput, South Arcot, Salem, Tanjore, Madura, Tinnevelly, Trichinopoly and Coimbatore,[1] accounted for two-thirds of the students though they had only 45 percent of the total population of the Presidency. In 1871, they still maintained the early lead, having 57 percent of the student population of the Presidency. The supremacy of the Tamil-majority areas at this time was evident at every level of instruction. In higher education, the districts of Madras and Tanjore were 'far ahead of the other districts', possessing half the total colleges in the Presidency and two fifths of the high schools. In primary education, it was again the Tamil-majority districts of Coimbatore, Madura and Tinnevelly that had attained the 'highest development' in 1871.[2] The exclusively Malayalem-speaking district of Malabar, after an indifferent start, began to challenge the supremacy of the Tamil areas during the 1880's. Between 1866-76, attendance in Malabar schools had increased by seventeen times, although the overall growth rate for the Presidency was only 600 percent. Especially significant was the progress that Malabar registered during the 1880's. While other districts were having difficulties in sustaining their earlier growth rate, Malabar's student population more than doubled during the decade. With female education making steady advance, Malabar emerged in 1891 as one of the most literate districts in the Presidency. The Telugu-speaking areas, on

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1. For a linguistic map of the Madras Presidency, see Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency, 1, (Madras, 1885), p 47.

2. Education Commission. Report by the Madras Provincial Committee, p 20.

the other hand, failed to register a similar growth rate. In 1859, the eight Telugu-majority districts of Vizagapatam, Godavary, Krishna, Bellary, Cuddapah, Kurnool, Nellore and North Arcot, though having almost two-fifths of the inhabitants of the Presidency, only accounted for a quarter of the student population. In 1871, there was no basic change in the position, and the Telugu areas hardly displayed as yet any capacity to narrow the lead the Tamil districts had established.

These regional disparities in educational growth, it must be emphasized, were caused more by such fortuitous factors as the siting of the Presidency capital, general accessibility, the location of mission stations, than by any deliberate official policy. If at all, Madras officials had always recognized the importance of providing equitable educational facilities for the various linguistic groups. As early as 1841, when the foundations of western education were being laid in Madras, Governor Elphinstone conceived a scheme for the establishment of 'superior Provincial Schools' in the main linguistic areas.[1] Over a decade elapsed before the schools were started in the centres of Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam concentration. Similar considerations also dictated the location of the zillah schools during the 1850's, and backward areas as Ganjam, Kurnool and Cuddapah were the main beneficiaries irrespective of the needs or claims of the more advanced districts.[2] But these initial efforts proved inadequate to achieve the desired results, and the regional imbalance remained. During the seventies and eighties, partly

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1. Opening of the Madras University, on the 14th April 1841, Appendix No. 2.

2. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1858-59, pp 8-10.

under the impulse given to higher education by the policy of decentralization,[1] education in the Telugu areas found a momentum that it had earlier lacked. By the end of the century, regional disparities were less evident in South India, and the early Tamil supremacy began to erode away gradually.

Anomalies in the growth education were also apparent elsewhere. The table below shows the response of the various communal groups in Madras to western education:

Communal Group	Percentage to total population in 1881	1865-6	1870-1	1875-6	1880-1	1885-6	1890-1
Hindus	91.4	38,412	93,830	232,366	268,139	377,166	512,263
Muslims	6.2	1,576	4,301	21,806	22,075	33,165	76,678
Indian Christians	2.3	7,617	12,276	21,777	29,080	37,419	47,510
Europeans-Eurasians		3,441	4,792	5,526	5,730	6,836	7,011
Others	0.1	10	13	3,005	2,784	1,251	702
Total	100	45,056	115,212	284,480	327,808	455,837	644,164

Source: Report on Public Instruction, Madras, for relevant years.

Not unexpectedly, the vast majority of students were Hindus. In a community of strong social distinctions and occupational specialization, any uniform response to western education is inconceivable. Indeed, during the early years, it was the higher castes, with a literary or administrative tradition, that were attracted to the new learning, while the less

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1. The effects of this policy on higher education are discussed in pp 34-6

affluent and socially discriminated lower castes held aloof. If the Brahmans and Sudras seized the opportunities provided by western education, the ritually 'impure' castes, or the Panchamas,[1] found few avenues to excel in the new learning. The prevalence of the theory of downward infiltration during the middle of the century, the hostility of the higher castes and, more important, economic backwardness conspired to keep the Panchamas outside the pale of western education. Reliable statistics, though hard to come by, reveal the deplorable state of Panchama education throughout the nineteenth century. In 1875-6, more than three decades after the implementation of the Elphinstone scheme, Panchama students totalled only 2,879, though the community constituted over one-seventh of the population of the Presidency.[2] Over the next decade, despite some official encouragement, there were little indications of any substantial improvement. In 1891-2, barely 23,000 Panchamas were studying at the various educational institutions in the Presidency.[3]

Inevitably, this unhappy situation precipitated a political agitation during the 1890's to secure more active state support for Panchama education. Prompted by the example of the Muslims, and encouraged by the sympathy shown by the missionaries and certain officials, the Panchama

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1. Means literally fifth caste, which included such groups as Madigas, Pallans, Pariahs, Totis and Valluvans. In contemporary records, they are grouped as 'pariahs and kindred classes', and as the term carried a derogatory meaning, it was discarded by officials in favour of Panchamas in 1903. For an account of the Panchamas, see E. Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, VI, (Madras, 1909), pp 43-4 & 77-119.

2. According to the census of 1881, 'Pariahs' totalled 4,439,253 in the Madras Presidency. See Imperial Census of 1881. Operations and Results in the Presidency of Madras, 1, (Madras, 1883), p 114.

3. A.M. Nash, Progress of Education in India 1887-88 to 1891-92, (Calcutta, 1893), p 182.

leaders demanded the foundation of elementary and normal schools for the community, scholarships for deserving and poor Panchama students, and facilities for industrial training.[1] The agitation succeeded in extracting some concessions from the Madras Government: scholarships and stipends to Panchama students in training schools were raised in 1893, while lands were assigned in the rural areas to build special Panchama schools.[2] An avenue towards Panchama emancipation, long sealed by economic oppression and caste stigma, was thus found in western education.

The other group that failed to float upon the early tide of western education was the Muslim community. In the Madras Presidency, the Muslims formed a small and struggling minority, numbering in 1881 just under two millions, or 6.2 percent of the total population. Almost a third of them were concentrated in the populous districts of Malabar and South Kanara, where Islam made early inroads through the medium of Arab traders and won converts largely from the lower castes of Hindu society. Proselytization was still active during the nineteenth century, and it was a cause of Hindu-Muslim friction in Malabar which, from time to time, led to the so-called Moplah outrages. The Moplahs, as the Malayali Muslims were called, were mainly engaged in commercial operations in the towns or were tenant-farmers of the Hindu landed gentry. Equally industrious, but less devoted to the cause of proselytization, were the Labbays of the coastal districts of Tanjore and Madura. Numbering about 30,000, the Tamil-speaking Labbays had long established a reputation for being a 'thrifty, industrious, and enterprising' community.

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1. T.B. Pandian, The Slaves of the Soil in Southern India, (Madras, 1893), p 41.

2. G.T. Boag, The Madras Presidency 1881-1931, (Madras, 1933), p 127.

Essentially traders, they had commercial connexions with Ceylon, Burma and the islands of Southeast Asia.[1] In contrast to the coastal Muslims, those in the interior districts of South India were largely the descendents of the Muslim conquerors from the North, spoke Urdu rather than a Dravidian language, and were dispersed in the old garrison towns. In the days of Muslim power, they constituted the administrative and military elite, but with the advent of British rule they lost their affluent vocations and were reduced by the 1880's to a 'very pitiable' condition.[2]

Early Muslim reactions to western education ranged from indifference to one of hostility. The coastal Muslims, especially the Moplahs, preoccupied with their commercial vocations and with no literary tradition, were largely content to persist in their old ways. They sent their children to the indigenous schools to study the Koran, acquire the rudiments of knowledge, and learn the local Dravidian tongue.[3] To these Muslims, western education had few attractions in the early years, except perhaps to undermine the religious convictions of their children. The interior Muslims, on the other hand, regarded the new learning with hostility. Racial pride, resentment against the new rulers, religious fears and opposition to the idea of secular instruction kept these Muslims aloof from western education. Events in Madras City during the 1850's demonstrated the depth of Muslim feeling against the new learning. The High School, for example, despite attempts to attract Muslim

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1. Imperial Census of 1881. Operations and Results in the Presidency of Madras, I, pp 38-42.

2. W.S. Blunt, India under Ripon. A Private Diary, (London, 1909), pp 288-9.

3. W. Logan, Malabar, I, (Madras, 1887), p 108.

students, failed to enlist any interest. In 1855, only 16 of its 551 students were Muslims. Attempts to launch special Muslim schools hardly generated any enthusiasm. The Madrassa-i-Azam, founded in 1852 primarily to foster western education alongside Arabic and Persian, did not achieve the desired results and declined into an institution for the study of Arabic, Persian and the regional languages. In 1857, when the Madrassa was on the verge of reorganization, only 46 of its 300 students were studying English.[1] The Harris School, launched in 1856 in the Muslim quarter of the metropolis, fared no better. Viewing these events with some despondency, the Director of Public Instruction advocated in 1859 the setting up of special Muslim schools by the state to stimulate Muslim learning. The Madras Government rejected the idea, regarding it inexpedient to start schools for 'any particular class'.[2] In 1871, when the Indian Government revived the idea, it was tactfully set aside by the Madras officials.[3]

The arrival of Lord Hobart as Governor of Madras in 1872, however, infused some new thinking among the officials and even convinced them of the importance of 'special agency' to stimulate Muslim education. Hobart regarded Muslim abstention from western education, and their consequent exclusion from the public service, as 'a serious calamity', injurious 'not only to the Muhammadans themselves, but to the most vital interests of the Empire'. He postulated a two-fold remedy to elevate

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1858-59, (Madras, 1859), Appendix D, pp cxxxv-cxli.

2. Ibid., p cxlix.

3. Selections from the Records of the Government of India. Home Department, No. CCV, Correspondence on the subject of the education of the Muhammadan community in British India and their employment in the public service generally. (Calcutta, 1886), pp 152-5.

Muslims to a position of parity with the other communal groups in South India: Firstly, Hobart called for an inquiry to ascertain 'the most cogent objections' of the Muslims to the existing system of education, with a view of modifying or removing them. Secondly, he wanted 'special consideration' to be given to Muslim aspirants to public service in an effort to eradicate the impression that the government was 'disinclined to admit them, whether qualified or not.'[1] The inquiry into the system of education revealed that the schools were organized, and the scheme of instruction framed, 'with exclusive reference to Hindoos', thus placing Muslim students at a great disadvantage. To remove this Hindu bias, the Madras Government decided to establish elementary Muslim schools in areas of Muslim concentration, in which instruction was to be given in Urdu by trained teachers equipped with suitable textbooks imported from other Presidencies.[2] Thus, the system of 'special agency' was accepted as a means of promoting Muslim education in 1872. In subsequent years, the system was further developed and by the early 1880's the 'special agency' provided fee exemptions to Muslim students, reserved a proportion of awards to Muslim scholars, established a Normal School to train Muslim teachers for elementary schools, and set up a Muslim Inspector of Schools to visit and advise Muslim schools.[3] By such incentives, Muslim education derived its

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1. Mary, Lady Hobart, (Ed.), Essays and Miscellaneous Writings by Vere Henry, Lord Hobart, II, (London, 1885), pp 272-9.

2. Selections from the Records of the Government of India. Home Department, No CCV, pp 155-7.

3. Education Commission. Report of the Madras Provincial Committee, p 59.

belated acceleration as the table below indicates:

Year	Scholars
1871-2	5,531
1872-3	9,843
1873-4	15,503
1874-5	19,158
1875-6	21,806
1876-7	20,653
1877-8	18,008
1878-9	16,576
1879-8	18,777
1880-1	22,075
1885-6	33,165
1890-1	76,678

The famine of 1876-8 was a temporary setback to the progress of Muslim education, and little advance was made during these years. However, part of the momentum was recaptured during the 1880's when Muslim growth rate outstripped that of the other communal groups. Despite this impressive performance, Muslim education still suffered as a result of premature withdrawal of students from schools.[1] Hence, as will be shown later, higher education failed to show the same degree of buoyancy.

III

Higher education[2] in Madras reflected, to a more disproportionate extent, the anomalies inherent in the structure of general education in the Presidency. The following table shows the progress of higher education in South India during the decades immediately after the establishment of the University of Madras:

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1880-81, p 12.

2. Higher education, as it used here, means collegiate instruction. The matriculation examination was the broad line of demarcation between secondary and higher education, and it was conducted by the University of Madras for students who had completed their secondary education.

Period	Matric. Passes	First Arts	B.A.	Law	Engineering	Medicine	Total
1857-66	937	149	62	16	5	1	1,170
1867-76	4,968	1,371	401	88	9	9	6,846
1877-86	12,880	2,983	1,214	161	31	58	17,327
1887-96	15,526	7,257	2,917	434	34	157	26,325
Total	34,311	11,760	4,594	699	79	225	51,668

Source: The Madras University Calendar, for relevant years.

The first decade of higher education in Madras was one of slow growth, at least in comparison to Bengal, which produced five times as many matriculates and four times as many B.A. graduates during this period.[1] The small output in Madras could be traced partly to the narrow base on which western education rested at the time of the Mutiny and partly to the excessive demand that the public service made on students leaving schools. The bitter conflict between the champions of secular and religious instruction during the 1840's, and the belated launching of the provincial and zillah schools a decade later materially affected the number of students seeking university admission at the time of its formation. Moreover, official openings for applicants leaving schools also impeded the progress of higher education. Particularly significant was the institution of the General Test in 1859, thus siphoning off into the Uncovenanted Service many potential university students.[2] However, these

1. A.M. Monteath, 'Note on the state of education in India during 1865-66', Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Home Department, No. LIV, (Madras, 1867), p 14.

2. S. Satthianadhan, History of Education in the Madras Presidency, (Madras, 1894), p 79.

factors were hardly operative during the years 1867-76 when higher education achieved a growth rate of unprecedented proportions. Passes in matriculation had quintupled, while increase in numbers graduating was even higher. The growth rate over the next decade, though not of the same magnitude, saw nevertheless the momentum fully maintained. The strong lead that Bengal had previously established over Madras was wiped off (Calcutta had 12,363 matriculate passes between 1877-86 as compared to 12,880 by Madras), and official optimism that higher education in South India was 'developing at a rate far beyond the expectations of the most hopeful well-wishers of educational progress in India' was well justified.[1] During the next decade, the pace of expansion, at least in the Arts, eased off gradually. With greater emphasis on commercial and technical education, and the narrowing of employment opportunities in the administration, demand for literary degrees receded somewhat during the early nineties.

The sharp expansion in student numbers was matched by the proliferation of colleges in the different parts of the Presidency. In 1858, when the first graduates passed out of the Madras University, South India was served by a single college. By 1871, however, eleven new colleges were established, either in the metropolis or in the principal towns of the mofussil. In many instances, it was primarily a question of elevating existing high schools into colleges as was indeed the case in Kumbaconam, Calicut, Bellary and Mangalore.[2] During the years 1872-81,

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1887-88, (Madras, 1888), pp 48-9.

2. Education Commission. Report of the Madras Provincial Committee, pp 18-9.

the number of colleges doubled to 25 largely in consequence of the official policy of decentralizing higher education by starting colleges in the less accessible parts of the Presidency. The tempo of expansion continued uninterrupted during the next decade when ten new colleges became affiliated to the Madras University.[1] Indeed, as McCully observes, Madras during the 1880's 'offered greater provision for collegiate instruction than did Bengal despite the earlier lead of the latter Presidency in the field of higher education'.[2]

The pace of college expansion was significant, especially during the eighties when the state sought to disengage itself from direct involvement in higher education. Armed with the recommendations of the Education Commission of 1882, and strengthened by the conviction that higher education possessed a self-sustaining momentum, the Madras authorities embarked on a policy of phased transfer of their colleges to private agencies. How vigorously this policy was pursued can be gauged from the fact that between 1881-93, the number of state-managed colleges had shrunk from ten to four. Invariably these colleges were transferred to local bodies, mission societies or Indian committees. In 1885, for example, the Government College at Salem was made over to the local municipality. In Berhampore, on the other hand, a hastily constituted Indian committee assumed charge of the local college when the state relinquished control in 1888. Hence, by the early nineties, the large majority of colleges had come under private management though abiding by

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1890-91, (Madras, 1891), p 32.

2. McCully, op.cit., p 160.

the rules laid down in the grants-in-aid system.[1] In an age of political awakening, the general loosening of state control over higher education was not without its significance. Political activities among students during the early 1890's, for example, grew in intensity as the state abdicated control over higher education. Equally important was the relative freedom that this situation conferred on teachers of aided institutions. While the official ban against political participation was extended to all sectors of the public service during the eighties, teachers in aided and private schools and colleges remained unaffected. In 1899, when the Madras authorities belatedly attempted to extend the ban to teachers and managers of all aided institutions, it raised a political storm, thus demonstrating how strongly these groups valued their long enjoyed immunity.[2]

Political repercussions also flowed from the regional disparities inherent in the growth of higher education in South India. Superior facilities and a more efficient system of communications permitted the Tamils to establish an early lead in the race for higher education. In 1866, for example, about 75 percent of the students in the Presidency College, the premier institution in Madras, came from the Tamil areas.[3] The situation was unchanged during the early 1870's when the Tamil districts of Madras and Tanjore dominated higher education in the Presidency. Possessing half the total colleges in South India and all the

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1. S. Satthianadhan, History of Education in the Madras Presidency, pp 205-6.

2. The Hindu, 7 & 16 November 1899.

3. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1865-66, (Madras, 1866), p cli.

first-grade colleges instructing up to B.A. standard, Madras City and Tanjore, by their easy accessibility to the Tamil areas, provided 'an enormous advantage' to the Tamil population. By contrast, the Malayalam-speaking district of Malabar failed to register any progress in higher education until a decade had elapsed after the foundation of Madras University. Cut off, virtually, from the metropolis by the high peaks of the Western Ghats and the inadequacies of rail and road communications, Malayali youths were long deterred from migrating eastwards for their collegiate education. Equally isolated were the northern Telugu districts which, in fact, became the worst casualty of the policy of concentrating higher education in the Tamil areas. Especially affected was the Northern Circars. 'This province', as the Director of Public Instruction admitted in 1876, 'with a population twice as great as that of Scotland and an area one-fourth greater, has yet derived no benefit from the introduction of railway into this Presidency, and although the establishment of coasting steamers has rendered these districts less inaccessible than they used to be to Europeans, the strong prejudices which many Hindus and most Brahmans have against sea-voyages have not been overcome, and very few students come down and prosecute their studies at Madras.' Indeed, after almost two decades of collegiate instruction, Northern Circars could hardly boast of half a dozen graduates.[1]

A growing recognition of these regional disparities during the 1870's precipitated the decision to decentralize higher education in Madras. Conscious of the impetus that institutions of higher learning

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1875-76, p 120.

gave to education in general, the Director of Public Instruction urged in 1876 the establishment of colleges in every district of the Presidency. Priority was to be given to the backward areas. Symptomatic of the new thinking was the decision in 1877 to establish a first-grade college at Rajahmundry, and it became 'a nucleus for the high education over a large tract of country.'[1] By 1886, it had 165 students in its college classes drawn principally from the neighbouring Telugu districts. At the same time, second-grade colleges, training students for the First Arts examinations, sprung up in rapid succession in the other Telugu areas, viz. Vizianagaram (1877), Vizagapatam (1878), Cocanada (1884) and Guntur (1884). Nor were the claims of the Malayalis ignored. In Malabar, Calicut became the centre of higher learning with two second-grade colleges established in 1868 and 1879, while a third started functioning in Palghat in 1888. Facilities for collegiate training were also provided in Travancore, where a first-grade college existed in Travandrum since 1869 and a second-grade college in Ernakulam since 1877. The success of the policy of decentralizing higher education can be gauged from the fact that in 1886 only eight of the 22 districts in the Presidency were without a college of their own, and these districts were at close proximity to the metropolis to warrant separate colleges.[2]

No accurate statistical compilation has been made of the advance registered by the various linguistic groups of the Presidency in higher education during the past century. Rough estimates, however, seem to

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1. Education Commission. Report by the Madras Provincial Committee, p 151.

2. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1885-86, (Madras, 1886), pp 103-4.

confirm the popular view that the Tamils never quite surrendered the early lead that they had established. Between 1858-94, a total of 1900 Tamil students had graduated in the Arts from Madras University, a number which exceeded the combined total of all other linguistic groups of South India. The Malayalis came next with 500 graduates, though numerically they constituted only a third of the Tamil population. The Telugus, numerically equal almost to the Tamils, could only boast of 450 graduates, while the Kanarese, equal in population to the Malayalis, accounted for 300 graduates.[1] In an age when the political elite was primarily recruited from the educated classes, Tamil preponderance in higher education inevitably led to Tamil domination of the early political movement in South India. To an equal degree, the Tamils also dominated the public service, and this was nowhere more apparent than in the Malayali-speaking States of Cochin and Travancore and the Kanarese-speaking State of Mysore. The situation caused resentment among the local elite and the eighties and nineties witnessed periodic outbursts of linguistic nationalism, manifesting itself in the cry 'Travancore for Travancoreans' and 'Mysore for Mysoreans'.

Equally significant in political terms were the anomalies that were apparent in the response of the different communal groups to higher education. The table below gives at a glance the communal composition of the graduates on the rolls of Madras University in March 1894:

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1. H. Naraina Rao, 'The Intellectual Progress of the Kanarese People under British Rule', The Madras Christian College Magazine, XIII, No.3, September 1895, pp 162-3.

Brahmans	Other Hindus	Indian Christians	Eurasians & Europeans	Muslims	Parsis	Total
2,393	660	287	115	26	2	3,483

Source: University of Madras. Calendar for 1893-94, I, pp 405-9.

The preponderance of the Brahmans is obvious and overwhelming. A small minority, constituting 3.6 percent of the total population, the Brahmans accounted for almost 69 percent of the graduates. Their domination was evident at almost every level of higher education, whether literary, scientific or professional, and was consistently sustained throughout the nineteenth century. Where caste prejudices did not interfere with their vocational pursuits, as they did for some years in the medical profession, the Brahmans asserted their intellectual supremacy to the full.

Brahman pre-eminence in the field of higher education was a product of various factors. On the one hand, the division of Hindu society along occupational lines had fostered a tradition of Brahman learning. In a society where higher learning served primarily a religious function, the Brahmans, in order to perform their caste obligations of expounding and interpreting the ancient religious texts, were compelled to undergo a long and rigorous intellectual training. Instruction was imparted in colleges and monasteries by Brahman priests and pundits, who regarded teaching as 'a part of their religious duty'.[1] Sanskrit was the medium of instruction, and though theology dominated the curriculum, subjects

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1. Education Commission. Report of the Madras Provincial Committee, p 67.

like astronomy, logic and law were not neglected. The education of the other castes, however, rarely went beyond the stage of imparting the rudiments of knowledge and acquainting them with their own vernaculars. Neither Sanskrit nor theology formed any part of their learning. The advent of the British Raj, though it deprived these indigenous schools and colleges of state patronage, did not immediately threaten their existence. Sustained largely by the revenues derived from religious endowments, Brahman learning continued uninterrupted through the long years of instability and wars. In Bellary, for example, there were 23 Sanskrit schools in 1823 devoted exclusively to the education of Brahman students.[1] In some areas, these institutions continued to flourish long after western education was introduced. In Malabar, for instance, there were three Sanskrit colleges in 1887 instructing Brahmans in theology and the Hindu sciences.[2] Hence, the Brahmans never abandoned their old learning, and they transmitted from generation to generation the treasures of ancient Indian literature, law and science. However far removed was this system of instruction from that of the West, and whatever its defects, it was the only system in India which exposed students to a continuous and rigorous intellectual training and demanded the application and discipline so essential for success in modern education.

However, Brahman supremacy in higher education cannot be explained solely in terms of their long literary tradition. To some measure, it was also a question of opportunities, which the Brahmans as a community enjoyed in more liberal proportions than others. Though their caste

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1. PPHC., IX, 1831-2 (735-1), pp 501-2.

2. W. Logan, Malabar, I, pp 107-8.

predilictions restricted their ability to amass wealth, the Brahmans on the whole were less susceptible to the normal fluctuations of fortune. State patronage in the past, earnings from temples, and acts of Hindu piety enabled the Brahmans to maintain themselves in sufficient comfort, even in times of stress. Wealthy landed endowments attached to temples provided stable revenues for the upkeep of priestly Brahman families.[1] Religious festivals were another lucrative source of revenue, and receipts at some temples[2] exceeded the annual budget of many a municipality in South India. Moreover, the Hindu belief in piety also resulted in the enriching of the Brahman. Acts of piety took various forms, including the payment of college fees of poor Brahman students.[3]

Of course, it would be wrong to assume that the Brahmans universally accepted western education. In Malabar, for example, the Nambutiri Brahmans held totally aloof from the new learning. Although regarded as 'the aristocracy of the land', owning extensive landed property in the district, the Nambutiris had few attractions for secular pursuits and led a life of simplicity and seclusion, shunning publicity and rarely moving

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1. South India is literally clustered with Hindu temples, mattams, and other shrines too numerous to enumerate. Invariably, they possessed landed endowments which yielded regular and even substantial revenues. In 1843, for example, receipts from temple endowments in five districts in the Presidency amounted to Rs 600,000 per annum. PPHC, XL, 1849 (621), Idolatry: Copies of Communications in relation to the connexion of the Government of British India with Idolatry or Mahometanism, p 76.

2. Receipts at the temple in Tripati, North Arcot, the scene of annual Hindu pilgrimage, totalled nearly Rs 110,000 annually during the 1830's. PPHC, XL, 1849 (621), p 197.

3. According to one estimate in 1887, five to six percent of all Brahman students receiving collegiate instruction in Madras were maintained by other castes. Proceedings of the Public Service Commission, V, Sec II, Evidence of N.R. Narasimha Iyer, p 170.

out of the confines of their estates.[1] They were the 'staunchest upholders' of the caste system, and more than any other class of Brahmans in South India, they had successfully retained their traditional sacerdotal position. The advent of the Raj, and the economic and social changes that it set in motion, hardly touched the Nambutiri Brahman, who in 1908 earned the nebulous distinction of being 'the truest Aryan in Southern India'.[2] In contrast, the Pattar Brahmans of Malabar eagerly accepted western education and emerged as the pioneers of change in the district, filling important secular positions that the Raj had created. Being settlers from the Tamil districts, they had entered Malabar as traders and in the course of years seized whatever opportunities that came their way. Unlike the Nambutiris, the Pattar Brahmans showed less preoccupation with religious doctrines or the caste system and more adaptiveness, which was demonstrated in their application to the new learning.[3] Such sharply contrasting Brahman responses were also evident in other areas. In the Northern Circars, the Vydiki Brahman held aloof while the Niyogi Brahman embraced western education. Similarly, in Tanjore, where higher education had become a virtual monopoly of the Tamil Brahmans, one group - the Vathima Brahmans - remained unaffected by it.[4]

In comparison to the Brahmans, the achievements of the other communal groups pale into relative insignificance. Some degree of

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1. W. Logan, Malabar, I, pp 118-20.
2. E. Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, V, pp 156-60.
3. Ibid., I, pp 354-5.
4. Ibid., I, pp 336-7.

satisfaction, however, was felt in the progress registered by the Indian Christians. Barely numbering two percent of the population of the Presidency, the Indian Christians struggled from humble beginnings and social prejudices into an influential minority. Accepting more readily than other groups the new standards of morality and social behaviour of the West, and profiting from the fostering care of the Christian missions, the Indian Christians responded with some enthusiasm for the new learning. If the women were the most literate in South India,[1] the men ranked second only to the Brahmans in higher education, accounting for over eight percent of the graduates in Madras in 1894.

There was, however, less cause for elation in the performance of the non-Brahman Hindus. For a community constituting almost 88 percent of the total population, its share of a mere one-fifth of the graduates was disappointing. Whatever the popular myths of Hindu response to western education, there is nothing to obscure the fact that the non-Brahman Hindus were a backward majority, with substantial sections untouched by the new learning. If the Panchamas, Shanars and Tiyars had few opportunities to excel, the enterprizing and wealthy trading castes, as the Nattukottai Chettis of Madura and Ramnad and the Komatis of the Tamil districts, evinced little early interest in the new learning. A similar spirit of inertia also prevailed over the great agricultural castes of South India, whether they were the Vellalars of the Tamil areas or the Kammas and Reddis of Telugu country. The rigidity of the Hindu social structure, and the long ingrained habits of occupational behaviour, militated against any uniform or immediate acceptance of

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1. The Hindu, 16 May 1891.

western education amongst the Hindu masses.

Equally unsatisfactory was the absence of effective Muslim participation in higher education. Hobart's scheme, while stimulating primary and secondary education, had little immediate impact in the sphere of higher instruction. The premature withdrawal of Muslim students was a subject of perennial complaint among the well-wishers of Muslim advancement. To Muslim thinking, it was 'a common grievance' that poverty and official apathy had 'debarred' the Muslims from pursuing college education.[1] This complaint had only partial foundation, especially with the extension of the 'special agency' to promote Muslim education. A number of scholarships were reserved for Muslim candidates aspiring for higher education, while Arabic and Persian were recognized as classical languages at college courses to redress any bias towards Hindus caused by the recognition of Sanskrit and the regional languages.[2] Under the influence of the 'special agency' and repeated official exhortations, there were apparent signs of improvement during the 1880's, as the table below shows:

Year	Matriculation Sat	Passed	First Arts	B.A.	B.L.	Engineering	Medicine
1880	60	15	2	1	0	0	0
1881	59	32	5	0	0	0	0
1882	71	19	6	0	0	0	0
1883	106	27	4	4	0	0	0
1884	125	47	5	0	0	0	0
1885	128	41	2	2	0	0	1
1886	126	31	5	4	0	0	0
1887	170	43	10	1	0	0	0
1888	168	35	8	3	0	0	0
1889	196	39	6	2	2	0	0

Source: The Madras University Calendar, for relevant years.

1. Education Commission. Evidence taken before the Madras Provincial Committee, Evidence of Mir Ansur-u-Din Sahib, p 18.

2. Ibid., p 59.

These disparities in the growth of higher education affected the composition of the public service, especially the higher echelons of the Uncovenanted Service, which during the second half of the nineteenth century was recruited on the basis of competitive examinations. Even before these tests came into force, it was the Brahmans, especially the Mahratta Brahmans, who dominated the Uncovenanted Service. In 1855, for example, the Brahmans held 237 of the 305 posts in the higher levels of the district administration of the Presidency.[1] The introduction of the competitive tests in 1859 hardly weakened Brahman supremacy. In 1886, of the 349 posts in the subordinate revenue and judicial service, 202 were held by Brahmans.[2] The position of the non-Brahman Hindus, on the other hand, bore little relation to their numerical strength. In 1855, they held one-sixth of the posts in the district administration; three decades later, their share registered a slight increase, with one-fifth of the posts being in their hands. Muslim representation in the public service was also weak. In 1872, when Hobart conducted an inquiry, it was found that Muslims occupied 19 of the 485 posts in the revenue and judicial line.[3] There was little change in their position over the next decade: in 1886, the Muslim share amounted to 15 posts out of a total of 349. With official employment regarded as much a status symbol as the source of steady income, and competition becoming keener during the eighties, the disproportionate preponderance by a small minority created inevitable political frictions. The less fortunate communities, having

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1. R.E. Frykenberg, 'Elite groups in a South Indian District: 1788-1858', The Journal of Asian Studies, XXIV, No.2, February 1965, p 267.

2. Proceedings of the Public Service Commission, V, Sec II, p 48.

3. Mary, Lady Hobart, op.cit., p 279.

little confidence in competitive tests, pleaded for proportionate representation of the various communal groups in public service. 'It is further of great importance politically', remarked a Muslim Statutory Civilian in 1887, 'that the sects forming the population of a province should be sufficiently represented in its administration with due regard, of course, to efficiency!' [1]

IV

By the early eighties, when a generation had elapsed since the establishment of universities in the main Presidency capitals, Madras had come to inherit a relatively large western educated class. It is not easy to determine its actual strength, partly owing to the absence of reliable statistics for the early period and partly because of the prevailing confusion as to the criteria that should be employed in defining the educated elite. If a pass in the matriculation examination is accepted as the criteria, and 1886 taken as the index year, a total of 18,785 students had matriculated in the Madras Presidency since the institution of the examination in 1857. Although the number was small in relation to the population (1:1,700), it was rather high in relation to the opportunities open in the public service, commerce or industry. Hence, the question of elite employment became one of the central political issues of the eighties, demanding not only the attention of the political bodies in the country but also the ingenuity of the rulers.

The problem however was one of recent origin. During the early years of western education in Madras, when official thinking was

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1. Proceedings of the Public Service Commission, V, Sec.II, Evidence of Mir Shujaat Ali Khan, p 32.

gradually veering towards the acceptance of western-educated Indians into the public service, the demand exceeded the supply. Hence, it became even necessary to encourage education by holding out special incentives. In 1846, for example, the Madras authorities decided to confer annual pecuniary awards and certificates of proficiency on those attaining the requisite standard in a competitive test. The scheme failed to win public support, and was pronounced an 'utter failure' in 1856.[1] This strengthened the demand for 'some more powerful incentive' to those presenting for the tests. The board of examiners suggested that successful candidates be awarded 'a right of preference to admission into the public service',[2] a plea that was consistently voiced during the 1840's by the Board of Governors of Madras University. But the controversy between the advocates of secular and religious instruction and opposition by certain heads of departments[3] deferred the change by a decade.

To a large measure, it was the discrediting of the old administrative elite during the 1850's that brought about a change in the system of recruitment. Under the old system, recruitment into the Indian agency had been guided more by caste, family and tradition than by any defined criteria of efficiency or attainment. Preference in the early years of the Raj was naturally shown towards groups which possessed administrative experience and which commanded the loyalty of influential

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1855-56, p 51.

2. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1854-55, p 33.

3. First Annual Report from the Governors of the Madras University, 1842, (Madras, n.d.), p 17.

and powerful sections of the community. In many areas of South India, the Indian agency was mainly drawn from among the Mahratta Brahmans, as they had centuries of experience in governing as well as proficiency in English. Their stronghold was the district administration, from where they not only exercised control over official patronage but also dexterously operated an extensive network of peculation and fraud. It was an official inquiry, conducted in Guntur in 1845, that provided the first real glimpse of the corruption and decay that had permeated certain levels of the district administration.[1] Similar testimony also came from non-official sources, and they received some confirmation from an official inquiry into the practice of torture in revenue collection in South India. The Torture Commission, in submitting its report to the Madras Government in 1854, drew attention to 'the great number of one family who fill the important Revenue and Judicial Offices in a district, thereby concentrating power, and obtaining extraordinary facilities for the successful maintenance of such an alliance'. It was urged that 'this league be broken up and its power destroyed' if official oppression, especially in the collection of revenue, was to be eradicated.[2] These disclosures dealt a final blow to the outdated system of administrative recruitment in Madras.

The new departure came in May 1858 when the Madras Government published altered rules governing admission into the Uncovenanted Service. Henceforth, all posts 'above the grade of peon' were to be filled

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1. R.E. Frykenberg, Guntur District 1788-1848, (Oxford, 1965), Chapter XIV.

2. Report of the Commissioners for the investigation of alleged cases of torture in the Madras Presidency, (Madras, 1855), pp 36-8.

on the basis of competitive examinations, called 'General Test', conducted periodically by the government. Graduates were exempted, though they were expected to show proficiency in law and a regional language. Although there was no guarantee of employment for every successful candidate,[1] the new rules nevertheless swept away the old system of official patronage based on caste, family and matrimonial connexions. The early examinations left few doubts as to the popularity of the change: 492 candidates sat for the first examination and 3,372 for the third.[2]

For much of the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Uncovenanted Service proved to be the single largest reservoir for the absorption of educated talent in South India. Organized into two broad divisions, viz. the district administration on the one hand and the special departments on the other, the Uncovenanted Service was almost exclusively an Indian agency. Indian applicants, on passing the General Test or a university examination, were admitted into the different grades of the service, depending on qualifications and individual preference. Promotion rested on seniority, ability, and departmental tests. At the higher level of district administration, which contained the most coveted posts, a total of 345 Indians were employed in 1886, either as Deputy Collectors, Tahsildars, Subordinate Judges or Munsifs. Of these incumbents, 158 had passed a university examination, while the rest were held by those who entered service by passing the General Test. Graduate representation was strongest among the Munsifs and weakest amongst the

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1858-59, Appendix F.

2. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1859-60, p 71.

Tahsildars: one out of every four Munsifs was a graduate while only four of 155 Tahsildars employed in the Presidency had a university degree.[1] However, an increasing number of graduates were being admitted during the eighties into the lower levels of the revenue line, especially as clerks and revenue inspectors, and in March 1891 the Revenue Department employed a total of 499 B.A. graduates, of whom 353 were clerks.[2]

The other outlet for educated talent in the Uncovenanted Service was the special departments entrusted with specific responsibilities, viz. Registration, Education, Public Works, Salt, Revenue Survey, Forest and Jails. These departments, depending on the inclinations of their heads, recruited educated Indians in varying proportions. Some of the departments became virtual preserves of Indian graduates. One such department was Registration. Organised in 1865, its first Inspector-General made it a deliberate policy to attract educated applicants, whether in the clerical side or at the level of sub-registrars and special registrars.[3] In 1891, the Registration Department employed 131 graduates, besides an even larger number of those who had passed First Arts or matriculation.[4]

Certain departments, however, showed less willingness to recruit

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1. Report of the Public Service Commission 1886-87, (Calcutta, 1888), p 34.

2. The Hindu, 19 February 1892.

3. Appendices to the Report of the Public Service Commission, 1886-87, (Calcutta, 1888), pp 397-9.

4. In 1883-4, for example, only five of 260 special and sub-registrars had not passed a university examination. Proceedings of the Sub-Committee, Public Service Commission. Registration Department, (Bombay, 1887), p 29.

Indian graduates. The Police establishment, though dominated by the Indian element in the lower ranks, rarely attracted university graduates. The low esteem in which the profession was held, the subordinate positions at which recruitment was made, and the alleged preference shown to Europeans in awarding promotions served to discourage educated Indians from joining the department. Exempted from the Secretary of State's order of 1879 restricting employment of Europeans on salaries above Rs 200, the Police Department, to some extent, became the outlet for the sons and relatives of civil and military European officers resident in India. Indian resentment was natural, and it was generally believed that 'the absence of rules prescribing definite qualifications for admission to these (higher)grades afforded considerable room for jobbery'. Indeed, of the 49 gazetted posts in the department in 1886, only one was held by an Indian.[1] A similar situation also appeared to prevail in the Salt Department. Exempted from the Secretary of State's order of 1879, it was the department's policy to recruit Europeans exclusively into certain higher grades on the belief that they were best fitted 'to govern a large number of subordinates and enforce discipline'. Hence, Indian graduates were a rare commodity in the department: in 1884, there were only 18 graduates in an establishment which had 487 posts carrying salaries of Rs 100 and above.[2] The weakness of graduate representation and the partiality towards Europeans prompted periodic Indian protests demanding that all recruits should enter 'through the royal door of

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1. Appendices to the Report of the Public Service Commission, 1886-87, pp 312-9.

2. Report of the Public Service Commission 1886-87, pp 422-7.

competition instead of through the back-door of jobbery'.[1]

Besides the Uncovenanted Service, the other areas in public service where Indian talent enjoyed an opening were the Covenanted Civil Service, Statutory Civil Service and the Indian States. The Covenanted Service, despite its prestige and salary, proved to be of little practical advantage to the graduates of Madras. The conducting of the examinations in England, the progressive reduction of the age of entry, and the few places available discouraged educated Indians in Madras from exploiting this avenue of employment. Indeed, after three decades of competition, Madras could boast of only a single successful entrant into the Covenanted Service. Nor was the Statutory Service, instituted in 1879 to recruit 'young men of good family and social position', a more promising field for Indian employment. Between 1879-86, only eight appointments were made in Madras on the basis of nomination and limited competition.[2] By contrast, the Indian States offered greater opportunities for educated employment. Mysore, Travancore, Cochin and Hyderabad, following the practice of the British provinces, began to increasingly throw open the doors of public service to the educated Indians during the second half of the nineteenth century. Positions of trust and influence, including the post of Dewan, were filled by the educated elite, and in 1891 a total of 174 Arts graduates of Madras University had accepted official employment in the Indian States.[3]

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1. The Hindu, 6 March 1897.

2. Report of the Public Service Commission 1886-87, p 27.

3. The Hindu, 19 February 1892.

Without a shadow of doubt, the public service provided the largest single outlet for the educated elite in South India. According to an estimate in 1853, 22 of 36 Proficients of the Madras High School (or 61 percent) were in official employment and were drawing monthly salaries of Rs 40 or more.[1] A more detailed survey of the occupational habits of Arts graduates in 1882 revealed that 416 of 971 graduates (or 43 percent) were in public service. Figures compiled for the Presidency College for this period confirm the overall trend of graduate employment in South India: of its 387 graduates in 1882, a total of 175 (or 45 percent) were public servants.[2] Estimates for the eighties are not available in isolation. However, of the 2386 Arts graduates on the rolls of Madras University in 1891, no fewer than 1019 (or 43 percent) were in state employment.[3] These figures, while indicating no proportionate increase in the official intake, show little overall weakening in the position that the state enjoyed as the leading employer of educated talent in South India.

The public service, despite its capacity to absorb large numbers of educated Indians, did not expand sufficiently to keep pace with the rate of educational growth in the country. This became increasingly apparent during the late seventies and early eighties when the problem compelled serious attention of the officials, press and political bodies. The pressure for state employment was most felt at the level of those passing

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1. S. Satthianadhan, History of Education in the Madras Presidency, p 35.

2. Education Commission. Report by the Madras Provincial Committee, p 119.

3. The Hindu, 19 February 1892.

the General Test. In 1879, the Director of Public Instruction admitted that those successful in these tests were 'enormously in excess of the number of appointments available'.[1] University graduates, though not in the same predicament, found less opportunities open to them and were often compelled to accept positions which they would have scorned in the earlier years. The political implications of the problem began to be emphasized, often in rather alarmist terms, and fears were expressed that inability to provide suitable employment for those leaving schools and colleges would 'breed only an element of dangerous discontent in the community'.[2]

The immediate, if rather instinctive, reaction of the Madras authorities was negative rather than constructive. In the search for remedies, they advocated the tightening of standards, limitations on the numbers competing for the tests, and the extension of the competitive system to posts thus far regarded as too low to merit it.[3] Thus, the Middle School examination was inaugurated in 1880, superseding the General Test, and designed for official appointments carrying a monthly salary of Rs 15-30.[4] These measures failed to stem the growing pressure for official employment in Madras, and their ineffectiveness underlined the importance of formulating a policy which would divert Indian talent into new and productive channels rather than merely impose restrictions on their entry into public service.

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1878-79, (Madras, 1879), p 177.
2. The Madras Times, 30 March 1878.
3. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1878-79, p 177.
4. S. Satthianadhan, History of Education in the Madras Presidency, p 127.

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Lord Ripon's appointment of the Education Commission in 1882 provided a much needed opportunity to reappraise some of the premises on which Indian educational policy had been evolving for over a generation. Although its terms of reference disavowed the need for any inquiry into 'the general working of the Indian Universities' or the state of technical education, the Education Commission could hardly ignore entirely these subjects, especially as they were attracting an element of political controversy. The Commission in its recommendations emphasized the need for 'diversity of culture, both on the literary and on the physical side'. At the level of secondary education, it urged that 'in the upper classes of high schools there be two diversions, - one leading to the Entrance examination of the Universities, the other of a more practical character, intended to fit youths for commercial or non-literary pursuits'. As for higher education, the Commission felt that greater provision should be made for the study of the sciences in government and sided colleges.[1] These proposals found general acceptance in Madras, and the next decade witnessed a systematic effort to reorientate the educational system in order to redress the past imbalance between the arts and the sciences.

The process of reorientation of secondary education in the light of the Education Commission's recommendations began in June 1887 when the Madras authorities ordered the recasting of the Middle School examination.

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1. Report of the Indian Education Commission, (Calcutta, 1883), pp 589 & 625.

The new scheme envisaged the bifurcation of the examination into 'a general side' and 'a technical and industrial side'. The latter incorporated a whole range of scientific subjects, designed to train youths for industrial, technical and commercial pursuits. Examinations were to be held at elementary and advanced levels, while liberal funds were to be provided for those institutions adopting the new curriculum. The scheme for Upper Secondary examination was formally announced in June 1889, and successful candidates were to receive 'passed certificates' from the Commissioner of Uncovenanted Civil Service examination.[1] This provided the necessary stimulus for technical and commercial education, and by March 1891 there were 18 institutions in South India preparing a total of 279 pupils for this examination.[2]

Amongst those who welcomed the change were some of the influential private institutions. Public opinion in Madras had come to recognize the need for the redeployment of educated talent, especially in commercial and industrial vocations. Symptomatic of this attitude was the decision of the Trustees of Pacheappah Charities to open a shorthand class in 1884. Thus far, the commercial world had been largely neglected by the educated elite, partly because of the low esteem in which the profession was held and partly owing to the uncertain prospects that were held out to those seeking employment. Moreover, the few who had turned to commerce as a career, either as dubashes, bankers, brokers or clerks, were a cause of some disappointment to their employers. It was a common complaint that educated applicants knew 'nothing of book-keeping, and

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1. The Fort St. George Gazette, January to June 1889, pp 404-9.

2. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1890-91, pp 44 & 107-8.

their handwriting is bad, and that they are in many cases unable to compose a simple letter'. The remedy lay in providing some commercial training, and the arrival of John Adam[1] in 1884 as Principal of Pacheappah College proved ~~fortuitous~~ fortune. He drafted a scheme for commercial education and persuaded the Director of Public Instruction to incorporate it in the curriculum for the Middle School examination. A shorthand class was started in Pacheappah College, and the favourable response emboldened its Trustees to launch a separate commercial school two years later. Other institutions, both missionary and Indian, followed suit, with the result that between 1890-4 a total of 154 students had obtained certificates in book-keeping, correspondence or banking.[2] The idea of raising 'a commercially educated middle class'[3] had thus found a modest realization before the nineteenth century drew to a close.

The necessity for a shift of emphasis from purely literary education was also recognized at the level of collegiate instruction. It had long been a source of complaint that 'university education is a literary education as contrasted with technical education'. Although there was provision for B.A. students to read a course in Physical Science, it

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1. John Adam, after graduating with M.A. in 1868, became Principal of Pacheappah College in 1884. In Madras, his efforts in the field of commercial education earned him local popularity, and he was hailed as 'the father of commercial education' in the Presidency. In 1891, he relinquished his post to read law and subsequently joined the Madras bar. A strong supporter of the Indian National Congress, he served in the Madras Standing Congress Committee for many years, and was its spokesman on commercial and technical education. Journal of the National Indian Association, No. 164, August 1884, p 384.

2. C. Gopal Menon, 'History of Commercial Education in South India', Bhashoddharraka Sri V. Venkateswara Sastrulu Commemoration Volume, (Madras, 1941), p 20.

3. The Indian Magazine, No. 181, January 1886, pp 32-3.

was hardly popular during the seventies, and the Madras Provincial Committee of Education Commission felt compelled to note the absence of 'an opportunity for students to graduate in a scientific course'.[1] The rather conservative Senate of Madras University, after a protracted inquiry, sanctioned a general revision of the B.A. course in 1883, incorporating science with general collegiate instruction. A further revision followed in 1891-2, and this saw the emergence of a distinct science division within the Arts colleges. In 1895, there were 475 students in the science division who, on graduation, were expected to apply their knowledge 'to arts, industries and manufactures'. These changes won general approval, and there was confidence in official circles in the ability of Madras University to turn out 'young men imbued to some extent with the scientific spirit and more or less familiar with scientific facts, laws and methods'.[2]

Also indicative of the shift towards scientific pursuits was the growing popularity of medicine and engineering. The Madras Medical School, established in 1835 to train subordinate medical staff, was unpopular during the early years owing to Indian opposition to western medical science and the prejudices of high caste Hindus. Despite the abstention of the Brahmans, a total of 603 students passed out of the Medical School between 1835-51 and entered service as dressers, hospital assistants and apprentices.[3] With the establishment of a Medical College

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1. Education Commission. Report by the Madras Provincial Committee, p 115.

2. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1894-95, (Madras, 1895), pp 94-5.

3. The Indian News, 16 January 1852.

in 1857, facilities were available for advanced medical training. However, the long duration of the course and the preference shown towards English graduates, affected the progress of the college and only eleven candidates succeeded in taking a degree between 1858-78. The situation, however, improved during the eighties with the growing popularity of the sciences and the diminution of employment opportunities for those in literary pursuits. Hence, between 1879-94, a total of 186 doctors graduated from the Medical College. The engineering profession, though it did not show a similar growth rate, began to attract more students during the eighties. While only 24 students had graduated from the Engineering College between 1858-80, a total of 55 were turned out over the next fifteen years.[1]

VI

The reorientation of the Madras educational system was only one result arising from the failure of the public service to absorb the growing number of educated Indians crowding the employment market. Another consequence was the remarkable acceleration in the growth of independent professions, especially law, teaching and journalism. The important role that these independent professions played in political and social reform movements, especially during the closing years of the nineteenth century, can hardly be exaggerated. 'School-masters, lawyers, and journalists', observed The Hindu in 1899, 'form the most important and active members of political bodies or associations'.[2] In an era when

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1. For the growth of medical and engineering professions during the second half of the nineteenth century, see page .

2. The Hindu, 7 November 1899.

political consciousness mainly stirred the western educated elite, and those in public service becoming progressively divorced from the political life of the country, it was but inevitable that the lawyer-teacher-journalist trinity should become the pace-setters of change as well as provide the backbone of political leadership in South India.

In this trinity, the lawyers were the dominating element. Their training acquainted them with the intricacies of the British legal system, including constitutional law and history, as well as with the highly complicated Hindu law. If the one gave them a grasp of the workings of the British political system, the other enabled them to shake 'the proverbial pagoda tree', largely at the expense of the litigious-minded landed gentry of South India. Their relative affluence, while attracting the best minds to the profession, also ensured their robust independence in political matters. As Eardley Norton claimed in 1889, 'the best political intellect of the country is, in the main, to be found in the keeping of the Vakils...On the whole, the best educated men in the country are the lawyers. They are also the most, if not the only, independent men in the Presidency.'[1] The profession, more than any other which the new learning had created, also provided an avenue of contact between widely dispersed and often isolated parts of South India. This was important to the otherwise insulated lawyer in the metropolis. Visits to the mofussil for professional reasons were utilized to stir up political activity and establish links between the different centres of South India. Indeed, by their training, affluence and enterprise, the Indian lawyers established their credentials to lead

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1. The Hindu, 23 July 1889.

the quest for political power.

The emergence of the legal profession was a slow process, involving a gradual transition from its Indian moorings to the full-fledged western model. From the early years of British rule, the Madras bar was divided into three classes of legal practitioners, namely vakils, attorneys and barristers. While the practice of the vakils, as the Indian pleaders were called, was restricted to the mofussil courts, the appearance of attorneys and barristers was confined to the Supreme Court at the metropolis. However, by the early 1850's, these distinctions were largely swept away, and barristers and attorneys were allowed to appear in the mofussil courts.[1] Simultaneously, some of the other anomalies affecting the profession were also removed. The vakils, who were first recognised by the British courts in Madras in 1802, had been allowed to practice during the early years subject to receiving 'a sunnud of appointment duly authenticated by the court to which they may be respectively attached'. Their appointment rested on no proven tests of competence, but this was partially rectified in 1817 by a provision to establish 'native classes to study the hindoo and mahomedan law and the regulations passed by Government, and for the periodical examination of students in those classes'.[2] Although the practice of appointing 'private' or 'uncertified' pleaders continued throughout the nineteenth century, this decision marked the inauguration of the pleadership

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1. John Shaw, 'The Predecessors of the High Court of Madras', The Madras Journal of Literature and Science, 1881, pp 151-2.

2. A.D. Campbell, A New Abridged Edition of the Code of Regulations for the internal Government of the Madras Territories, II, (Madras, ?), pp 269 & 321-2.

examinations, which in subsequent years underwent periodic revision, invariably to raise the qualifications of those wishing to compete. In 1879, for example, when the Legal Practitioners Act was passed, the right to compete was mainly confined to those who had passed matriculation.[1] Successful candidates were divided into first and second grade pleaders, based on their performance, with the former allowed to practice in district courts and the latter in the district munsif's courts. Entry into the High Court, however, was virtually reserved for another class of Indian practitioners who were trained in Madras University. This was a degree course, instituted in 1858, and the recipients of the degree were allowed to appear both in the High and district courts. A third route of entry into the profession was the bar examination in England. The European practitioner in Madras invariably entered through this route, although there were some rare instances of Indians entering the profession in this way.

In the years immediately before and after the Mutiny, the Madras bar was dominated by its European element. Early in the field, and facing little competition from Indian practitioners, many European barristers were able to collect 'handsome incomes'. During the sixties, there were instances of single fees amounting to Rs 30,000, and prominent European lawyers were earning about Rs 10,000 per month. The vakils, far from challenging European supremacy, were acting as juniors to their European counterparts, and the leader of 'the Native Bar' had to be content with Rs 2,000 per month.[2] The turning point came before the

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1. The Madras Mail, 26 May 1893.

2. The Pioneer cited in The Hindu, 5 September 1893.

decade had elapsed, when vakils decided to set up their own practice and assert their power, especially in the lucrative field of Hindu law. By mastering the ancient texts of Hindu law, made easy by their knowledge of Sanskrit, the vakils became evidently 'better equipped than the Barristers and Attorneys in respect of laws of special applicability to Indian cases'.[1] Suits involving inheritance, social usage and land tenures were increasingly referred to the vakils, and by the eighties the Original Side of the Madras bar was virtually under vakil control. Some began to encroach on the Appellate Side, for long regarded as the preserve of the European barristers.[2] The 'Vakil Raj', so often used to describe vakil domination of early political movements, was first established in the legal profession, and largely at the expense of European practitioners.

The practice of appointing private pleaders and the absence of complete pass lists of pleadership examinations rule out any possibility of accurately assessing the growth of the legal profession in South India. According to the census returns of 1881, there were 4,705 legal practitioners in the Presidency, which included not only private pleaders but also petition writers. Of these, 64 were barristers, solicitors and attorneys with English qualifications, while 2,516 were vakils.[3] As the Madras University had produced only 167 law graduates until 1882, it is obvious that the vast majority of the vakils in Madras were certified

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1. A /nanda/C/harlu/ The Madras Bar and how to improve it, (Madras, 1883), pp 23-4.

2. V.C. Copalaratnam, A Century Completed. (A History of the Madras High Court) 1862-1962, (Madras, n.d.), pp 125-6.

3. Imperial Census of 1881. Operations and Results in the Presidency of Madras, I, p 141.

pleaders practising in the mofussil courts. Despite the relatively large number of lawyers, the profession remained lucrative during the eighties and the envy of those in other vocations. An indication of its popularity is provided by the output of law graduates in Madras University. While 85 passed during the 1870's, a total of 269, or three times as many, passed during the ensuing decade. The results of pleadership examinations reflect a similar trend: 21 passed in 1883, 135 in 1889, and 233 in 1892. With this accelerated expansion, the profession became more competitive and less remunerative, and even provoked the Madras Law Journal to complain in 1897 of 'the overcrowding at the Bar'.[1]

Established on a less lucrative footing, but nevertheless possessing wide political influence in South India, was the teaching profession. As foreshadowed by John Bruce Norton[2] in 1856, at a time when the western-educated Indians were first entering the profession, the Indian schoolmaster began to look upon himself as 'the centre of a new circle, a fresh lever for the elevation of his fellow subjects'.[3] The role of the teacher in the work of India's regeneration was exercised at two distinct planes. At one plane, which was within the classroom, the teacher moulded the thinking of his pupils, instilling in them a feeling

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1. Advocates' Association, Madras. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1939, (Madras, n.d.), p 106.

2. J.B. Norton (1815-83), educated at Harrow, Oxford and Lincoln's Inn, was Government Pleader and ultimately Advocate General of Madras. A prolific writer, he was a fervent advocate of Indian administrative and judicial reform and a champion of Indian interests. For a biographical sketch, see Journal of the National Indian Association, No. 153, September 1883, pp 516-26.

3. The Educational Speeches of the Hon'ble John Bruce Norton B.A., p 38.

of pride in India's institutions and traditions. At another plane, which was outside the classroom, the teacher shouldered part of the burden of public work, employing his spare hours either in managing religious institutions, settling caste disputes, running the affairs of municipal and district boards, or organizing debating clubs and political societies. He was often recruited to speak at public meetings, and at times was a contributor to the local newspaper. Hence, in many parts of the Presidency, 'the most competent and trusted adviser in matters politics was the schoolmaster'.[1]

The teaching profession, despite its rapid expansion during the second half of the nineteenth century, always retained a certain fluid character. Low salaries and poor conditions of service divested the profession of many of its attractions, and it was only the last resort of the educated Indian in search of employment. In many instances, teaching was only a springboard to other vocations, with the disgruntled schoolmaster spending his spare hours, and even his teaching time, studying for university and public examinations. Rarely was he professionally qualified to teach, nor did he show any disposition to undergo the necessary training. The problem was most acute at the level of primary instruction where trained teachers, as the Madras Provincial Committee of Education Commission remarked, were 'a pressing want'.[2] Even amongst graduate teachers, many remained untrained, admittedly performing a make-shift duty and awaiting the earliest escape to a more lucrative profession.

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1. The Hindu, 16 November 1899.

2. Education Commission. Report by the Madras Provincial Committee, p 81.

However, the teaching profession began to attain some measure of stability during the eighties, partly with a diminution of employment prospects in public service and partly with new opportunities being created for private initiative in the field of secondary and higher education. The latter, stemming from government disengagement from higher education, encouraged educated Indians to launch private institutions. Helped by private capital or public subscriptions, the organizers often showed a determination to make their efforts a success. One successful venture was the Native High School in Kumbaconam. Founded by three Brahman graduates in 1876, the school overcame many of its early difficulties, and its success in public examinations earned it popularity and public support. Between the years 1876-89, a total of 350 students of the school had passed the matriculation examination.[1] The institution, the first of its type in South India, became a source of inspiration to other graduates wishing to imitate its example.[2]

Accurate estimates of the growth of the teaching profession are difficult to obtain, largely owing to the absence of reliable statistics of those employed in indigenous schools. According to one estimate, there were 23,851 teachers employed in the various parts of the Madras Presidency in 1886-7. Of these, over 80 percent, were teaching in primary schools. In secondary institutions, a total of 4,283 teachers were employed, of whom almost 20 percent had no professional

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1. The Hindu, 13 July 1889.

2. K. Subba Row, who started his career by establishing a high school in Coimbators in 1882, admits that the example of the Native High School in Kumbaconam 'awakened a keen desire in several of the students to take to the profession of teaching and to open new schools wherever needed'. K. Subba Rao, Revived Memories, (Madras, 1933), pp 47-8.

qualification. Instructing at the collegiate level were 240 teachers, who were either qualified recruits from England or graduates of Madras University.[1] The graduate element in the profession remained relatively high. Of the 796 B.A. graduates in known professions in 1882, a total of 208 (or 26 percent) were in the teaching profession, either as principals of high schools, or lecturers in colleges, or in the inspecting agency.[2] Over the next decade, despite a numerical increase in graduate teachers, there was no indication that the profession was exerting any greater pull on those leaving colleges. Of a total of 1,611 B.A. graduates in known positions in 1891, 371 (or 23 percent) were employed in the profession.[3]

Unlike law and teaching, Indian journalism was a wholly 'foreign plant' engrafted on Indian soil, and its 'remarkable growth' during the closing decades of the nineteenth century[4] epitomized the transformation that western education and technology had effected in the sub-continent. During the early years of British rule, the press had primarily a religious function and, to a limited extent, served the social and commercial needs of the European community. Christian missionaries in Madras, equipped with their own presses, disseminated religious doctrines in the regional languages by translating the Bible, distributing loose sheets and tracts, and publishing periodicals and newspapers. In 1831,

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1886-87, (Madras, 1887), p 113.

2. Education Commission. Report by the Madras Provincial Committee, p 119.

3. The Hindu, 19 February 1892.

4. Ibid., 23 September 1901.

for example, the London Missionary Society launched a quarterly periodical in Tamil, devoted mainly to religious and social subjects. [1] These publications prompted Indians to venture into the field of journalism, largely to uphold their own religious doctrines and usages. Hindu religious societies in Madras, as the Sadur Veda Sidhanta Sabha in 1845, [2] established their own presses and issued tracts and newspapers in defence of Hinduism.

However, as these theological controversies died out during the 1850's, journalism in Madras began to acquire an increasingly secular character. Amongst the English language newspapers, it was the European-owned that enjoyed almost unchallenged supremacy during the 'sixties and 'seventies. The Athenaeum and Daily News (1845), the Madras Times (1858), and the Madras Mail (1867), all European-owned and edited, dominated circulation in Madras. By comparison, Indian ventures in English journalism had limited success and lacked permanence. The Native Interpreter (1840), the Crescent (1844), and the Rising Sun (1853) folded up after a brief period of precarious existence. Their successors, the Native Public Opinion and the Madrassee, fared no better. Launched during the 1870's, they were amalgamated in 1877 into the Madras Native Opinion which, however, 'fell into the hands of men who were opposed to the general current of educated Indian opinion' and disappeared during the early 'eighties. [3] Nor were early Indian attempts in the

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1. K. Ingham, Reformers in India, 1793-1833, (Cambridge, 1956), p 105.
2. The role of this society in the religious controversy of the 1840's is discussed in Chapter II.
3. K.P. Viswanatha Aiyar, 'A History of Journalism in Madras', The Madras Tercentenary Commemoration Volume, (Madras, 1939), pp 451-7.

field of vernacular journalism more successful, despite the absence of European competition. Indeed, in February 1877, there were only 13 vernacular newspapers, with an estimated circulation of 4,000, to meet the demands of the four linguistic groups of the Presidency.[1]

A new era in the history of Indian journalism dawned in Madras with the launching of The Hindu in September 1878 by 'six ardent youths just out of college'.[2] Attributing past failures to 'the individual drawbacks' of the editors, the sponsors of The Hindu believed that the moment was 'propitous' to warrant 'fresh attempts', especially in view of the 'many changes' overcoming Indian society. The Hindu was to be more than a medium to provide information or reflect public opinion. 'The Press does not only give expression to public opinion', read the first editorial, 'but also modify and mould it according to circumstances'.[3] Commencing publication as a weekly at a period of crisis in India, caused partly by the famine and partly by Lord Lytton's policies, The Hindu soon acquired popularity by its fearless advocacy of India's interests. During the early eighties, Madras was convulsed by a period of political turmoil, originating from the administrative scandals of the Grant Duff era and European opposition to the policies of Lord Ripon. When The Hindu was enlarged and converted into a tri-weekly in 1883, the decision stemmed largely from a desire to neutralize European agitation seeking

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1. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, February 1877.

2. In effect, the burden of running the paper fell on two of them: G. Subramania Iyer, editor from 1878-98; and M. Viraraghava Chariar, managing proprietor from 1878-1905. For an account of the early history of the newspaper, see The Hindu, 21 September 1903.

to undermine Ripon's policies.[1] Six years later, with political activity in Madras having 'increased and expanded in many directions', it was made a daily[2] - the first Indian-owned daily in South India. As the first editor of The Hindu explained in 1903, the success of the venture was largely due to the fact that it 'fell harmoniously into line with the spirit of the times; ...It was the duty of the Hindu to create public opinion to reflect it, and then to derive support from it which then it was instrumental in forming.'[3] It became the 'guide, philosopher, and friend' of the educated elite, and 'the favourite paper of the Vakils and native of officials throughout the Presidency'. Moreover, it was in the very hub of political activity in Madras, providing for many years the 'local habitation' of the Madras Mahajana Sabha and the Madras Standing Congress Committee.[4] The success of The Hindu encouraged its proprietors to start a Tamil weekly in 1881 to educate the Tamil-speaking population on the political questions affecting the country. From its small beginnings, the Swadesamitran soon became among 'the most widely circulated of the Tamil journals' in Madras,[5] and was converted to a daily in August 1899 - thus earning the distinction of becoming the first vernacular daily in South India.

Stimulated by the example of The Hindu and the Swadesamitran, and responding to the developing political consciousness in the country, a

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1. The Hindu, 5 October 1883.
2. Ibid., 13 February 1889.
3. Ibid., 22 September 1903.
4. Ibid., 21 September 1903.
5. Ibid., 31 December 1896.

host of Indian-owned newspapers emerged during the 1880's, published either in English, vernacular or Anglo-vernacular. In the metropolis, owing to the entrenched position of the English-owned dailies, there were only limited scope for new ventures, but this did not prevent the launching of the People's Friend (1881) and the Hindu Observer (1883). Moreover, certain organized communal groups also established their own newspapers. The Madras Anjuman-i-Islamiah, for example, started the Ittifaq to propagate its interests. The Eastern Guardian was the recognized organ of the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association of Southern India, while the Eastern Star aspired to voice the claims of the Indian Christians.

In the mofussil, Indian ventures in English journalism proved to be dismal failures. The Madura Mail, for example, launched in 1886 on the belief that the southern districts of Madura, Tinnevelly, and Trichinopoly needed an English weekly, failed to enlist much support and was compelled to suspend publication on a number of occasions.[1] A similar fate overtook another English newspaper in Calicut. The Malabar and Travancore Spectator, founded in 1885 by an Indian vakil, passed through a chequered career before ceasing publication in 1897.[2] These failures at least left the field open for vernacular and Anglo-vernacular journalism. Amongst the more successful of the Anglo-vernacular organs was the Coimbators Crescent, edited by S.P. Narasimhulu Naidu, a writer of ability and a strong supporter of the Indian National Congress. Far more pervasive and influential in the mofussil was the

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1. The Hindu, 7 February 1898.

2. Ibid., 23 November 1897.

vernacular press. Edited largely by men without the benefit of higher education or large capital outlay, the vernacular newspapers managed to sustain themselves by minimizing their costs and catering for local needs. Calicut, for example, was served by no less than three Malayalam weeklies in 1894. The other centres in the mofussil, though not in the same position, were nevertheless able to support a vernacular or Anglo-vernacular paper, and by 1890 a total of 82 vernacular and Anglo-vernacular papers were distributed throughout the Presidency with a combined circulation of 45,000.[1]

With the rapid expansion of the Indian-owned press in Madras, journalism began to shed its amateur status and emerge as a full-time vocation. The early Indian newspapers failed partly because those who managed and edited them were unable to 'give their whole time' to them.[2] Even The Hindu for some years was managed as a part-time concern, with both its editor and proprietor continuing their teaching duties. However, as the paper became a tri-weekly and then a daily during the eighties, they decided to abandon teaching and devote themselves wholly to journalism. Similar instances were found in other ventures. C. Kunhi Raman Menon, editor of the Kerala Patrika of Calicut, was in the dual profession of teacher and journalist for three years before becoming a full-time editor.[3] However, to many Indians entering the profession, journalism remained a hazardous pursuit. Competition from Europeans,

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1. No reliable estimates are available of the circulation of the English language press in this period.

2. The Hindu, 22 September 1903.

3. V.L. Sastri (Ed.), Encyclopaedia of the Madras Presidency and the Adjacent States, (Madras, 1921), p 632.

defaulting subscribers, and refusal of Indian capitalists to invest in journalism kept the Indian-owned press in a state of precarious existence. In these circumstances, the profession held few attractions for the educated elite. Some graduates joined to use it as 'a stepping stone for something better'.[1] The majority who embraced journalism, however, were prompted more by political fervour than by any monetary prospects. As the editor of The Hindu observed in 1897: 'Journalism to Indian is a means to public good'.[2] If the profession lacked stability and financial attractions, it was not devoid of political influence and glamour.

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1. K. Subba Rao, op.cit., pp 83-4.

2. The Hindu, 7 December 1897.

Chapter II

The Early Political Activity

The beginnings of political activity in Madras, or rather the expression of local, provincial or national wants and grievances in accordance with the accepted norms of constitutional agitation, antedates the Indian National Congress by almost half a century. While it has been often recognized that the roots of the Congress lay in the separate regional movements that gave it birth, few, however, have adequately emphasized the basic continuity that existed between this body and its lesser-known predecessors, especially in the sphere of leadership, ideology and agitational techniques.

However, in some important respects, the formation of the Indian National Congress constituted a break with the past. Early political activity, in contrast to what happened during the 1880's, possessed neither an organized basis nor an integrated programme of provincial or national advancement. What emerged during this early stage of Indian political activity was the agitation of large and vague groupings, like the community and public, directed principally against specific administrative evils. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that this phase of activity often manifested itself spasmodically, with brief periods of intense activity followed by long spells of inertia. During outbursts of activity, loosely-organized political bodies or hastily constituted ad hoc committees convened public meetings, drafted memorials, and waited on official dignitaries to demonstrate their displeasure for some official measure. When the wrong was corrected, or when some

concession was exorted, these bodies relapsed into a state of inactivity. Much of the political agitation in Madras during the pre-1880's fits this description and this chapter seeks to outline in broad terms this early phase of activity in South India.

I

Political agitation in Madras began essentially as a protest against the alleged departure of the ruling authority from its declared policy of religious neutrality under the twin pressures of Christian missionaries and 'proselytizing' officials. To the Hindu leaders, painfully conscious of past attempts at conversion by foreign rulers, the advent of the missionaries in growing numbers, especially after 1813, was a cause of some uneasiness. However, what transformed this feeling into one of active concern was not so much the missions' ability to win converts as the fear that they might precipitate a change in the prevailing policy of religious tolerance.[1] The fact that India was governed by a Christian power, ostensibly vulnerable to the pressures of powerful missionary lobbies in England, aroused fears in the Indian mind that the rulers might eventually be coerced 'into the concession of an open patronage' of evangelical operations.[2] Indeed, as Governor Trevelyan observed, nothing caused greater trepidation amongst the Hindus than the prospect of 'the tremendous machine of the Government being brought into the field against them'.[3]

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1. G. Norton, Proselytism in India, pp 50-1.

2. MPP, Range 249, Vol. 69, April-July 1859, Memorial of the Madras Native Association to Lord Stanley, 9 April 1859.

3. Ibid., Minute of Trevelyan, 28 June 1859.

The origins of Indian suspicions of the Christian missions could be traced to the early 1830's when the Madras Hindu Literary Society functioned as a spokesman of enlightened Hindu opinion in the metropolis. / Established along the lines of the European-dominated Madras Lierary Society and Auxilliary of the Royal Asiatic Society, this Hindu body's primary concern was 'to elevate the condition, both intellectual and political', of its community.[1] In 1833-4, under its auspices, George Norton, Advocate-General of Madras and 'Corresponding Member' of the Society, delivered a series of lectures on 'the plan of Government and the system of administration of Justice in India'.[2] These lectures emphasized the importance of western education, not only to qualify Indians for higher administrative posts, but also to advance their 'Political privileges'. However, when a missionary sponsored Madras Native Education Society announced its plans to start a seminary to impart western instruction in 1834, the Hindu leaders showed no disposition to trade religion for the new learning. The Hindu Literary Society, after considering the scheme, refused co-operation so long as the seminary professed 'to interfere with the religious principles of the Youth'.[3]

Hindu suspicions, however, gradually turned to open hostility during the late 1830's when the missionaries in Madras launched a two-pronged attack on 'the giant of heathenism', one aimed at converting high caste Hindus through the agency of liberal western education, and the other

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1. The Madras Male Asylum Herald, 16 July 1834.

2. For text of these lectures, see G. Norton, Rudimentals; being a series of discourses, (Madras, 1841).

3. The Madras Male Asylum Herald, 26 November 1834.

designed to compel the Madras authorities to relinquish control over Indian religious institutions. The Hindu Literary Society had emphasized the risks involved in sending children to mission schools, but its failure to provide alternate facilities, coupled with official inertia, left Hindu parents with no option but to turn towards the missionaries. Hence, when the Free Church Mission of Scotland entered the educational field in 1837, Hindus gave a warm welcome and 'all was praise for us (missionary teachers) and our labours for their sons'.[1] However, this fund of goodwill disappeared in 1841 when three high caste Hindu students embraced Christianity, creating 'a panic in the Native community',[2] and resulting in the foundation of Pacheappah school in 1842 to accomodate those students withdrawn from missionary institutions.

As an open conflict was developing over the issue of student conversions, the missionaries were directing a successful frontal assault on the religious policies of the Madras Government on the grounds that they violated the principles of religious neutrality. Indeed, as the missionaries pointed out, neither in theory nor in practice was the religious policy in Madras really neutral. Regulation VII of 1817 vested the Board of Revenue with general supervision over Indian religious institutions. In practice, official intervention in religious affairs extended to the last detail, from the supervision of festivals to the appointment and dismissal of temple servants. In effect, the district Collector came to be regarded not only as 'a friendly guardian' of Indian religions but also a regulator of their 'ceremonies and festivals - as

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1. The Spectator, 18 May 1844.
2. The Dawn in the East, p iv.

the supervisor of the priests and servants'; as 'the faithful treasurer of the pagoda funds' and 'comptroller of the daily expenses' of temples.[1] Official intervention did not cease here. It was 'almost universal practice' in South India to compel the lower castes, including Christian converts, to assist in Hindu religious festivals, while European soldiers were posted in attendance 'to give additional effect to the show'.[2]

Such a radical departure from its professed policy of religious neutrality exposed the Madras Government to criticisms from various quarters. In England, the negotiations for the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1833 provided a platform for the advocates of the evangelical cause to assail the religious policies pursued in South India. In Madras itself, the voice of protest began to be increasingly heard. In 1833, for example, the Christians in Tinnevelly complained to Parliament against the partiality of the local authorities towards Hindus and their religious institutions.[3] In an effort to escape from any embarrassment, and at the same time bring about 'a recurrence to that state of real neutrality', the Court of Directors instructed the Indian authorities in February 1833 to sever official connexion with Indian religious affairs. But nothing was done during the next few years to implement the decision, until events in Madras dramatically brought the issue to a point of crisis. In August 1836, the European residents in Madras, including missionaries and civil and military officials, delivered a strong protest

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1. PPHC, XL, 1849 (621), p 437.

2. J.W. Kaye, Christianity in India: An historical narrative, (London, 1859), p 389.

3. PPHL, III, 1852-53 (20), pp 637-9.

to the governor of Madras. Their main grievance was the forced attendance of Christians in Indian festivals. In urging a policy of religious neutrality, they advocated the amendment of Regulation VII of 1817 and a total withdrawal of official connexion with Indian temples and endowments.[1] Further official vacillations precipitated the resignation of the Commander-in-Chief of Madras, Sir Peregrine Maitland, on conscientious grounds.[2] Confronted by this fresh wave of protest, and fearful of Parliamentary intervention, the Court of Directors capitulated in August 1838 and ordered the peremptory withdrawal of official connexion from Indian religious affairs.[3] The task of transferring temples and their rich endowments to either village heads, or zemindars or trustees was completed in Madras during the next few years.

In the conflict between the rival factions in Madras, the decision to relinquish control over Indian religious affairs was viewed as a triumph for the missionaries. Coming at a time when the missions were also converting high caste students, this triumph inevitably sharpened the conflict between the two factions. The missionaries, in an effort to sustain the pressure, opened more English schools in various parts of the Presidency. For example, a German mission started a school in Mangalore in 1841, and two years later converted three Brahman students

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1. PPHC, XLIII, 1837 (357), Memorial of the European population of Madras to the Governor of the Presidency, pp 1-5.

2. PPHC, XLIII, 1857-58 (79), Correspondence respecting the resignation, by Sir Peregrine Maitland, of the office of Commander-in-Chief of Madras, pp 1-6.

3. Kaye, op.cit., pp 427-8.

despite 'a great uproar' in the town.[1] At the same time, the missionaries came out in strong opposition to the Elphinstone scheme. The exclusion of religious instruction was severely criticized, and the Madras High School, because of its secular bias, was regarded as 'a serious obstacle to Bible education'.[2] Moreover, the need to maintain a propaganda war prompted the Free Church Mission in October 1841 to launch its organ, the Madras Native Herald.

The Hindu leaders, in an effort to arrest the tide of missionary advance, displayed determination as well as a capacity for organised action. To reduce the danger of student conversions, the Hindu leaders were compelled to start their own educational institutions. The foundation of Pacheappah school in 1842 was 'the first example of intelligent natives of various castes combining to aid the cause of popular instruction'. Over the next few years, the Trustees of Pacheappah Charities started branch schools in other centres, largely in competition with missionary endeavours.[3] At the same time, family pressures were exerted to win over those youths who had embraced Christianity. If this failed, suits were instituted to recover guardianship over the student converts. Moreover, the Hindu leaders in the metropolis deviced other methods to frustrate further missionary inroads. The heads of leading caste groups, in the words of one missionary, 'formed combinations starting from Madras as the centre. The vilest calumnies and lies were invented at

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1. The Madras Christian Instructor and Missionary Record, I, April 1844, pp 621-4.

2. Ibid., p 65.

3. S. Satthianadhan, History of Education in the Madras Presidency, Appendix K.

Madras, and, like the frogs in the land of Egypt, went up into the country, into the houses of great men and into the dwelling of every mean men, till they reached and poisoned every Zillah and station in this part of India'.[1] By 1845, with the Hindu Literary Society in a dormant state, an aggressive Hindu religious organization, the Sadur Veda Sidhanta Sabha, had started functioning in Madras. It had its own press, published a regular bi-monthly newspaper and occasional tracts in defence of Hinduism, and engaged lecturers and agents to tour the Presidency countering the missionary propaganda.[2]

As these opposing factions intensified their struggle, the attitude of the local officials, both in their private and public capacity, assumed a new significance. During the early years of the British Raj, officials displayed a pronounced anti-missionary bias, with the result that evangelical activities were curbed, while there was an easy tolerance towards Indian religions and usages. However, since the 1820's, there was a gradual change in official attitudes caused by the emergence of 'a new reforming sentiment in Great Britain' under the impact of liberal and evangelical doctrines. The early tolerance of Indian ways was replaced by an era of innovation and reform, especially after the advent of Lord William Bentinck as Governor-General in 1828.[3] Symptomatic of this change of attitude was the alliance that was forged in

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1. The Spectator, 18 May 1844.
2. The Madras Christian Instructor and Missionary Record, III, August 1845, pp 475-6.
3. T.R. Metcalf, op.cit., pp 3-18.

Madras between prominent officials and the missionaries to overthrow the policy of state interference in Indian religious affairs. Over the next decade, especially with the arrival of Governor Tweeddale in 1842, this alliance steadily extended its influence, and even 'infected the principal departments of the Government'.[1] The 'missionary party', as this coalition of officials and missionaries came to be known, was in the words of George Norton 'large, influential, and active',[2] and claimed as its active adherents Governor Tweeddale and the Chief Secretary J.F. Thomas.

To the Hindu leaders in Madras, this increasing official identification with missionary activities was a cause of great concern. Especially disturbing was the part played by certain prominent officials in the agitation against state interference in Indian religious institutions. By openly participating in a missionary inspired campaign, the officials appeared to have given some credence to the missionary claim that their evangelical operations enjoyed official sympathy. The governorship of Tweeddale only strengthened Hindu fears about the proclivities of the leading officials. The failure to amend Regulation VII of 1817 to extend protection to temples and endowments transferred to Indian hands, the hostility shown towards the Madras High School and the idea of secular instruction, and the open patronage of missionary operations by the leading officials inevitably created serious doubts in

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1. M. Lewin, The way to lose India; with illustrations from Leadenhall Street, (London, 1857), pp 18-9.

2. G. Norton, Proselytism in India, p 4.

the Indian mind as to the ability of the Tweeddale Administration to deal impartially between the conflicting claims of missionary and Hindu factions, or even uphold the integrity of the Hindu religious and social system.

To those Hindu leaders in Madras, troubled by this change in official attitude towards proselytization, the publication of the Lex Loci Draft Act in January 1845 came a shock. It was not the manoeuvrings of the missionaries, as suspected by the Hindus, but rather the need for a code of law applicable to Europeans, Eurasians and Armenians that lay behind the original conception of the Lex Loci report, drafted by the Indian Law Commission in 1840. But missionary agitation did influence the eventual drafting of the Lex Loci Draft Act when three clauses, strictly unrelated to the measure,[1] were inserted to neutralize those sections of Hindu and Muslim law which inflicted 'forfeiture of rights or property upon any party renouncing, or has been excluded from the communion of either of these religions'.[2]

The Hindu leaders in the metropolis reacted angrily, and convened a public meeting in April 1845 to demonstrate their opposition to the proposed legislation. Attended by over 200 Hindus, and presided over

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1. PPHL, XXX, 1852-53 (41), Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to inquire into the operation of the Act 3 & 4 Will. 4, c. 85, for the better Government of Her Majesty's Indian Territories, pp 203-4.

2. Kaye, op.cit., p 457.

by Gajulu Lakshmanarasu Chetty,[1] the meeting endorsed a strongly worded memorial charging the Indian Government of 'a breach of faith'. Particular objection was taken to those clauses which sought to provide safeguards to the rights and property of Indians renouncing their faith. These clauses, the memorialists argued, constituted 'a palpable invasion of their ancient rights, a direct attack upon their religion, and a peremptory subversion of their ancestral and inalienable Law'. It was contended by the Hindu leaders that their laws of inheritance were 'part and parcel of their religion' and 'a sacred principle' which had been recognized in the past and guaranteed by the Charter of 1833. They urged that these 'obnoxious clauses' be 'altogether expunged from the Act', or further action on the entire Act be suspended pending an appeal to the Court of Directors.[2] The Madras protest, supplemented by another from Bengal, won a temporary respite for the Hindu leaders when the Indian Government deferred action.

Barely had the excitement over the Lex Loci affair subsided before religious disturbances erupted in Tinnevelly between Hindus and Indian Christians. Since the beginning of the century, Tinnevelly and south Travancore became the centre of intensive proselytizing operations. The focus of missionary interest was the Shanar community, the hereditary toddy-drawing caste, which embraced Christianity en masse. The drift towards the new faith also affected the Panchamas, whose conversion

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1. G. Lakshmanarasu Chetty (1806-68), son of a wealthy indigo merchant in Madras City, was the most prominent of the early political leaders of South India. Endowed with courage and a spirit of self-sacrifice, he spent his fortunes and energy in the cause of political advancement. For biographical details, see G. Paramaswaran Pillai, Representative Men of Southern India, (Madras, 1896), pp 145-65.

2. The Madras Native Herald, IV, 1845, pp 204-19.

helped to swell the number of Indian Christians in Tinnevelly to 40,000 by 1850.[1] The emergence of a sizeable 'breakaway' minority, drawn exclusively from certain servicing castes, was bound to create some degree of social and economic dislocation. On the one hand, the converts revolted against the social restrictions that the caste system had imposed on them. Economically, conversion loosened the bonds that tied these agricultural classes to the landowing higher castes, aided by such factors as the new employment opportunities in coffee plantations and public works. High caste landowners, confronted by a less docile tenantry, attributed much of their troubles to the missionaries. Believing that much of their problems would be solved if their converted tenant recanted, the Hindu landlords resorted to persuasion and cajolery. When these overtures failed, persecution started. If the convert was a palmyra climber, he was deprived of his trees; if he was a tenant, eviction followed; if he had family property, he was disinherited.[2] Sometimes, persecution assumed the character of intimidation and violence, which in turn provoked retaliation from the Indian Christians. Plagued by this religious problem, Tinnevelly during the 'thirties and 'forties was the scene of bitter land disputes, tenant evictions and occasional communal violence.

In November 1845, according to missionary accounts, a Hindu mob made an unprovoked attack on certain Christian villages in Tinnevelly, plundering houses, destroying or seizing property, and molesting

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1. R. Caldwell, The Tinnevelly Shanars, (London, 1850), p 110.

2. G.U. Pope, Mission of Sawyerpooram, Part V, (London, 1849), pp 8-9.

inhabitants. The missionaries alleged that the Hindu religious societies in the district, under instructions from the Sadur Veda Sidhanta Sabha, instigated the disturbance in an effort to stem the mass conversion of the lower castes to Christianity.[1] The police arrested over 100 Hindus in connexion with the outrages, and many were found guilty by the local court.[2] The Hindus appealed against the sentences, and the Court of Sadr and Foujdari Adalat squashed many of the convictions. At this stage, the Madras Government intervened and called upon the judges to submit copies of evidence taken in these cases and the sentences passed. This precipitated a dispute amongst the three Sadr judges, while two of them, including Malcolm Lewin, opposed what they construed as an executive interference in the affairs of the judiciary. A long and acrimonious dispute developed between the two judges and the government. Eventually, under pressure, one of the judges relented and 'offered a most ample apology for the error', but Lewin remained unrepentent and defiant, even leaking details of the controversy to the local press.[3] In September 1846, Lewin was suspended from duty, and was ultimately dismissed in January 1847.

The controversy between the Tweeddale Administration and the Sadr judges was closely watched by the Hindus, who regarded the incident as yet another example of 'the arbitrary and proselyting animus of the local

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1. Church Missionary Record, XVII, 1846, pp 39-41.

2. The Madras Christian Instructor and Missionary Record, IV, November 1846, pp 637-42.

3. PPHC, XXVII, 1852-53 (426), East India: First report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories, together with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix No. II, pp 546-50.

authorities'. The suspension of Lewin prompted the Hindu leaders to convene a public meeting in October 1846 to adopt a memorial to the Court of Directors as well as an address to M. Lewin for his efforts 'to maintain the independence' of the judiciary. Amidst popular excitement, with both the police and the military garrison alerted for fear of disturbance, the meeting passed a series of resolutions protesting against the activities of the 'missionary party'. The main grievances of the Hindus were set forth in great detail in a long memorial to the Court of Directors. Much of the memorial was an attempt to demonstrate that the 'Civil and Religious rights and privileges' of the Hindus were being violated by the missionaries, abetted and encouraged by the European officials. The Tinnevelly disturbance received due mention. Tinnevelly, the memorialists asserted, had become 'the emporium of Missionaryism' under the active auspices of the local officials, of whom the most prominent was the Collector E.B. Thomas, brother of the Chief Secretary. The intervention of the executive in the Sadr judgement was attributed to 'a clandestine petition' which a missionary deputation presented to Tweeddale in March 1846. The Directors were urged to restore the independence of the judiciary, and dissuade their servants in Madras from openly patronizing the activities of the missionaries.[1]

The official reaction to this Hindu demonstration was one of disdain. Governor Tweeddale, while claiming that official policy had not departed from the position of 'perfect neutrality', asserted that he had endeavoured to check 'any undue interference' of officials in the

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1. Proceedings at the Public Meeting of the Hindu community, held in the rooms of Pacheapah's Institution, on Wednesday the 7th October 1846, (Madras, 1846), pp 1-16.

prevailing religious disputes of Madras. At the same time, he dismissed the allegations against the Collector of Tinnevelly as 'mere fabrications of Europeans and of a native Club at Madras'. Indeed, Tweeddale traced the Hindu agitation to 'a small and vicious party' in the metropolis which was embittered by the success of the Free Church Mission in converting high caste students.[1] While agreeing to forward the Hindu memorial to the Court of Directors, the Tweeddale Administration rebuked its authors for being 'grossly misled by the publications of the day' and urged 'the propriety, on all future occasions, of withholding their judgement, and refraining from representations touching the proceedings of Government whilst the facts...are unknown to them'.[2]

This sharp disavowal, however, failed to carry any degree of conviction. In a further petition to the Court of Directors in May 1847, the Hindu leaders asserted that the facts in their previous memorial were 'capable of ample demonstration'. They reiterated the original charge that 'the desire and intention of the Marquis of Tweeddale is to subvert their religion, in order to plant a system of Christianity on its ruins'. The old facts were restated, while fresh evidence were marshalled to further substantiate the case. Particular emphasis was placed on the issue of Bible classes in state schools. In 1846, on the suggestion of the Council of Education, Tweeddale advocated the introduction of

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1. Tweeddale Collection, Eur.MSS. F. 96, No.6, Tweeddale to Hobhouse, 26 October 1846.

2. The Memorial of Hindu Inhabitants of Madras Presidency to the Court of Directors, 12 May 1847, (Madras, n.d.), p 21.

'optional' Bible classes in state institutions.[1] In the face of persistent rumours, the Hindu leaders in the metropolis sought clarification from the Madras Government in March 1847, but failed to elicit any response. This official silence increased Hindu apprehensions, especially as Bible classes were regarded as 'a covert plan' to ensnare their children. The danger of possible disorder in the face of further interference in their religious affairs was also emphasized, especially in the mofussil where it would be difficult to recruit an European constabulary.[2]

The open dispute between the Tweeddale Administration and the Sadr judges, and the growing volume of Hindu protests, prompted the intervention of the Court of Directors. The need to maintain a policy of religious neutrality was again emphasized. Moreover, the Madras Government was reminded that it was its duty, 'and not less so of its officers, to stand aloof from all missionary labours'. Objection was also taken to the use of the term 'heathen' in official documents while referring to Hindu and Muslims.[3] The Directors were equally firm in adhering to the principle of secular instruction in state institutions. The idea of 'optional' Bible classes, as advocated by Tweeddale, was rejected as neither expedient nor wise.[4] At the same time, the attention of the

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1. PPHC, XXIX, 1852-53 (897), East India: Sixth report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories, pp 189-91.

2. The Memorial of Hindu Inhabitants of the Madras Presidency to the Court of Directors, 12 May 1847, pp 1-20.

3. PPHC, XXVII, 1852-53 (426), p 558.

4. PPHC, XXXVI, 1852 (361), Return of the number of scholars...the instruction afforded in each, and whether the Christian Scriptures are used, p 9.

Indian Government was drawn to the necessity of controlling the pro-missionary tendencies of its officials. 'The Government is known throughout India', observed the Directors, 'by its officers, with whom it is identified in the eyes of the native inhabitants, and our servants should therefore be aware that, while invested with public authority, their acts cannot be regarded as those of private individuals'. While unwilling to restrict the individual liberties of officials, the Directors were anxious that 'the power and authority of Government should never be exerted or manifested for the promotion of missionary objects'.[1] The firm intervention of the Directors, coupled with Tweeddale's departure in 1848, helped to restore some degree of political tranquility in South India.

However, this tranquility was soon broken when the Bombay missionaries revived agitation in support of the Lex Loci Draft Act in 1849. Since 1845, when the Indian authorities had detached the 'obnoxious clauses' and incorporated them in a separate bill, the issue had been shelved by the failure to secure the approval of the Court of Directors. But with the recrudescence of missionary agitation, action could no longer be deferred, and in April 1850 the Draft Act was enacted and became known as the Caste Disabilities Removal Act. The decision to legislate, after seemingly abandoning it four years previously, caused anger and consternation in Madras. In a protest memorial, the Hindu leaders denounced the measure as a 'direct act of tyranny' on the part of the British rulers who deserved 'the hatred and detestation of the

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1. PPHC, XLII, 1857-58 (71), East India: Missionaries; Idolatry, pp 3 & 11.

oppressed'.[1] Hindu resentment also found expression in the Crescent, which regarded the enactment as 'contrary to the letter and provisions of the charter' and 'the most intolerant act' ever passed by the British authorities.[2]

II

By the early 1850's, owing to the interaction of a number of factors, the need for an effective political organization began to be increasingly felt in Madras. Firstly, the demise of the Hindu Literary Society had deprived the metropolitan Hindus of their only means of organized political expression. Realizing that the absence of such bodies was 'a great bar to their political advancement', the Hindu leaders revived the Hindu Literary Society in March 1846.[3] However, it soon lapsed into its past state of inactivity, presumably failing to rally the various Hindu factions in the metropolis. Secondly, the policies of the British authorities, coupled with the conduct of some of the officials, threatened to undermine the integrity of the Hindu social and religious system. The vigorous Hindu protests of the 1840's had not been entirely successful, either in staving off discriminatory legislation as the Caste Disabilities Removal Act or in restraining officials engaged overtly in the cause of proselytization. A well organized body, to watch over Indian religious interests, appeared to be essential if official aggrandizement was to be kept in check. Thirdly,

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1. Kaye, op.cit., pp 458 & 462.
2. Cited in The Athenaeum, 24 January 1850 & 21 January 1851.
3. The Spectator, 19 March 1846.

with the increasing speculation as to the nature of inquiry which should precede the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1853, Hindu leaders found a further opportunity for a renewed assault on official shortcomings, embracing not only religious policies but also the revenue, educational and judicial measures. An assault on a wider front, prompted by the Charter inquiry, demanded greater resources and organizing capacity.

As these thoughts were occupying the minds of the Madras leaders, it was in Bengal that they first found practical expression. In October 1851, the leading citizens of Calcutta launched the British Indian Association to represent Indian grievances during the Charter inquiry. While there were certain broad similarities between this body and its immediate predecessors, the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society, the new association constituted a point of departure in two important respects. Firstly, the British Indian Association wished to establish an agency in London to facilitate direct representations to the British Parliament rather than seeking 'to confine its solicitations to the Bengal Government'.[1] The second point of departure, which was significant from the viewpoint of South India, was the decision of the association to extend its operations outside Bengal, and thereby embrace within the fold of a single organization the different regional interests of British India. Madras was invited to co-operate, either by forming 'a Corresponding Committee' affiliated to the parent body, or by establishing an independent organization with

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1. The Athenaeum, 2 December 1851.

broadly similar objectives. The emphasis, however, was on the need for active co-operation, as the Bengali leaders believed that it would endow 'great weight' to Indian representations and eschew 'diversity of opinions' on questions of reform.[1]

Reactions in Madras favoured the idea of inter-provincial co-operation, and at a meeting convened in February 1852 a Madras Branch of the British Indian Association was inaugurated. The objects and rules of the parent body were adopted, and the Madras leaders pledged full co-operation in promoting 'the improvement and efficiency of the British Indian Government'. Membership was to be of four kinds, viz. Honorary, Ordinary, Corresponding and Extra. The Honorary members, not to exceed ten at any single moment, were to be men of 'distinction, influence, or ability'. There was, however, no limitation on the number of Ordinary members seeking admission, provided they paid an annual subscription of Rs 30. Neither the Corresponding members, recruited from those living outside the Presidency, nor the Extra members, admitted on paying an annual fee of Rs 5, possessed a vote or right of seeking a seat in the Committee of Management. It was this Committee, annually elected from among the Ordinary members, which discharged 'the ordinary business' of the body, namely keeping liaison with the parent body in Calcutta, preparing draft petitions for submission to Parliament, and undertaking publications to disseminate the objects of the association.[2]

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1. Proceedings of the Madras Branch of the British Indian Association, and of the Deccan Association, (London, 1852), pp 4-5.

2. The Spectator, 1 March 1852.

Very little is known of those who actively participated in the formation of the Madras Branch of the British Indian Association. There is little doubt that much of the driving force came from Lakshmanarasu Chetty and his co-adjutor Harley, the editor of the Crescent. A man of obscure background, Harley on his own admission helped in the drafting of the petition that Madras submitted to Parliament in 1852.[1] A glance at the composition of the Committee of Management elected in February 1852 reveals that the mercantile element was in an overwhelming majority. Like Lakshmanarasu Chetty, a number of wealthy merchants sat on the Committee. However, other groups did not go unrepresented. C. Yagambaram Mudaliar, the first President of the body, was an influential mirasidar with extensive landed property in the mofussil. A representative of the western-educated elite in the Committee was V. Sadagopah Charlu, a Proficient of the Madras High School, and perhaps the first known leader of the 'Native Bar' in Madras. Having started practice in the Sadr court, he eventually established his reputation on the Appellate Side of the Madras High Court.[2]

From the beginning, relations between the Calcutta organization and its Madras affiliate began to run into difficulties. The early months of joint endeavour revealed the inherent conflict of interest underlying the aims of the two provincial groups, while the absence of

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1. Ibid., 24 October 1853.

2. V. Sadagopah Charlu (1827-63), born to a well-known Brahman family, was among the more prominent political leaders of Madras during the 1850's. A man of 'singular modesty', he was remembered in Madras as 'the first Native Legislative Councillor', having held his seat from January 1862 until his death in August 1863. The Madras Times, 20 August 1863.

the spirit of compromise made a split inevitable. The rift between Calcutta and Madras manifested itself openly when a petition drafted by the former was opposed by the latter on the grounds that the interests of certain classes had been neglected. The Calcutta petition, according to Lakshmanarasu Chetty, related 'almost wholly to the plans and recommendations of the change of government and for the exaltation of the higher classes of Hindus', while ignoring 'the grand object' for which the association was founded, namely 'the plain representation of tangible grievances and making remedies thereto'. What took the situation to the brink was the decision of the Bengali leaders to circulate the petition in England without securing prior approval of Madras. The leaders of Madras, resenting this 'want of proper respect for their opinion',[1] decided to sever their connexions with Calcutta and organize an independent body to serve the interests of South India. The new organization, called the Madras Native Association, was launched at a public meeting in July 1852 and Malcolm Lewin, who had 'always expressed the most kindly feelings towards the native community', was named as its London agent.[2]

In breaking away from the Calcutta body, the Madras leaders were seeking freedom to express their sentiments rather than altering the character of their organization. Hence, the rules of the Madras Branch of the British Indian Association remained the basis of the new association's constitution. The immediate aim was to lay the grievances

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1. The Spectator, 19 July 1852.

2. Ibid., 16 July 1852.

before the British Parliament, which was expected to discuss the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1853. The ability of the Madras Native Association to do this depended partly on the availability of funds, especially to meet the charges of printing, circulating and presenting its memorials in Parliament. It was estimated that a capital outlay of Rs 50,000 would be needed, and the Committee of Management in launching an appeal for funds in August 1852 also decided to engage an agent to raise subscriptions in the various mofussil centres.[1] The task of drafting a petition had long occupied the attention of the Madras leaders, and since July 1852 their work was one of 'condensing the mass of their information and researches into a Petition'.[2] The document was completed by December 1852 when a public meeting was convened to seek popular approval before sending it to England.[3]

The reception accorded to the Madras petition in England far surpassed whatever ambitions its authors might have entertained as to its outcome. Its intrinsic worth lay in the fact that the picture it portrayed of the rule of the Company was radically different from that painted by the Board of Control. In detailing 'some of the main grievances and wants' of South India, the Madras memorialists demanded the reduction of taxation, observance of the policy of religious neutrality, reform of the judicial machinery, greater investment in education, irrigation, and communications, and the infusion of a non-official element in the Indian legislatures. A plea was made for a full-scale

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1. The Athenaeum, 13 July 1854.
2. The Spectator, 4 April 1853.
3. Ibid., 13 December 1852.

inquiry into Indian affairs by an impartial commission of officials and non-officials, pending which the Company's Charter be annually renewed.[1] While introducing the petition in the House of Lords in February 1853, Lord Ellenborough commented on some of the material grievances mentioned by the Madras memorialists. He regarded it as 'a scandal' that the Company had failed to maintain the existing irrigation works in India; at the same time, he called for 'a very great reform' in the Indian judicial system. Though not supporting the demand for an impartial commission to visit India, Ellenborough felt that the inquiry of the Select Committees could be extended to consider the grievances raised by the Madras Native Association.[2] The reaction of the British press was generally sympathetic. The Times regarded the Madras representations as 'a solemn complaint', coming from a country which ought to be 'the greatest example of social improvement in the world.'[3] The Daily Times, writing in a similar vein, asserted that there was 'an entire absence of all the characteristics of good government' in Madras. The Madras petition, observed the paper, exhibited 'a state of things discreditable in the extreme to our boasted superiority in Indian administration.'[4] Further discomfiture was caused to the Company when the Bombay and Bengal petitions were presented in Parliament in March-April 1853, which endorsed in the main the grievances set forth in the Madras memorial.

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1. Petition to the Imperial Parliament from the members of the Madras Native Association, 10 December 1852, (Madras, 1852), pp 1-41.
2. Hansard, cxxiv, pp 631-41.
3. Cited in The Athenaeum, 12 April & 12 May 1853.
4. Cited in The Spectator, 1 April 1853.

An event which threatened to inflate the Charter negotiations into a Parliamentary controversy was the formation of the Indian Reform Society in London in March 1853. In launching this body, the 'Friends of India' were largely prompted by the desire to check any 'hasty legislation' on the Charter issue, and bring 'public opinion to bear on the Imperial Parliament' in support of Indian reform. There had been misgivings over the way in which the Select Committees had conducted their inquiry, while the decision of the Aberdeen Ministry to introduce the India Bill before the conclusion of the inquiry caused further dissatisfaction. The nucleus of the Indian Reform Society was a group of thirty M.P.s, which included such stalwarts as J. Bright, R. Cobden, J. Hume and H.D. Seymour.[1] Also represented was an influential group of ex-Indian officials, whose knowledge and experience of India was to prove invaluable in the coming struggle over the India Bill.[2]

With the emergence of the Indian Reform Society, the stage was set for a lively Parliamentary contest between those favouring immediate legislation on the Charter issue and those insisting upon 'a temporary Act' until a full-scale inquiry was completed. Sir Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control, while introducing the first reading of the India Bill in the Commons in June 1853, opposed the idea of 'a temporary continuing Bill' on the grounds that it would be regarded in India as 'a source of weakness'. He also rejected the demand for an independent inquiry, contending that the grievances expounded by the

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1. The Spectator, 9 May 1853.

2. The Athenaeum, 19 May 1853.

Indian associations were 'susceptible of local remedy'. Alluding specifically to the petition of the Madras Native Association, Wood dismissed it as 'a tissue of exaggeration and misrepresentation', containing statements 'known to be utterly untrue'.[1] When the India Bill came up for a second reading, Lord Stanley moved an amendment suggesting, that prior to 'a final settlement' of the issue, 'further information is necessary to enable Parliament to legislate with advantage for the permanent government of India'. In the meantime, he urged the enactment of 'a Continuance Act for a limited period of time'.[2] The amendment was supported by Hune, Macaulay, Cobden and Bright, but when the Commons divided on 30 June victory deserted the Indian Reform Society and the India Bill was passed by 322 to 140 votes,[3] thus giving the East India Company a fresh lease of life to administer its Indian possessions.

Neither the provisions of the India Act of 1853 nor the speech of the President of the Board of Control provided much cause for elation in Madras. As a leading member of the Madras Native Association observed, the India Act only intended 'a very partial and insignificant remodelment of the Court of Directors, a change in the distribution of Home patronage in the Court, and the opening of the Civil Service to public competition'. The changes envisaged, he asserted, had 'little or no bearing upon the interests of the people of India' nor did they 'meet in the

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1. Hansard, cxxvii, pp 1092-1116.
2. Hansard, cxxviii, p 617.
3. Ibid., cxxviii, p 1074.

slightest degree the wants of this Presidency'.[1] These sentiments were echoed by the Madras Native Association in a memorial to Parliament in April 1855. It expressed regret that the India Act contained 'no reference to any thing calculated to improve the condition of the people, nor any definite promise, or even an implied one, of redress of the grievances'. The retention of the system of 'double Government' was deplored, and the hope was expressed that the Indian Empire should be at the earliest moment placed under 'the management of an individual and responsible authority subject directly and immediately to the Imperial Parliament'. As for the admission of Indians into the Covenanted Civil Service, the Madras Native Association believed that it was 'far more a nominal than a real boon' as caste and expense nullified the concession. It pleaded for simultaneous examinations, especially as universities were about to be established in India.[2]

If the India Act of 1853 had caused disappointment in Madras, the speech of Sir Charles Wood in introducing it in the Commons was received with derision. Wood's thesis that Indian grievances were 'susceptible of local remedy' failed to convince the Madras leaders. The Madras Native Association asserted that provincial governments could not be expected to redress wrongs 'so long as they are composed of two or three Company's officials, legislating in the utmost secrecy...secure not only from all check, but from the least shadow of knowledge on the part of

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1. The Spectator, 9 April 1855.

2. Fourth petition to the Imperial Parliament from the members of the Madras Native Association, and other inhabitants of the Madras Presidency, 2 April 1855, (Madras, 1855), pp 1-2 & 16-17.

the people'. Moreover, Parliament was held responsible for some of India's ills. One crying evil was the oppressive ryotwari system of South India, and the Madras Native Association argued that 'as the Parliament has been the author of it, or, that at least, it has been established by its sanction', Parliament should also be 'the instrument of its abolition'.[1] Wood's strictures on the Madras leaders for inaccuracy in their representations were dismissed as 'wholly unjustifiable'. To substantiate some of its original charges, the Madras Native Association alluded to the revelations of the first report of the Public Works Commission, while recent official measures, as reduction in land assessment, were cited as further testimony of the accuracy of its first petition. In good measure, the Madras leaders also challenged the British Government to appoint an impartial commission to ascertain the truth of their grievances.[2]

However, the Madras Native Association found an opportunity to vindicate itself in October 1853 when H.D. Seymour, Chairman of the Indian Reform Society, arrived in Madras to ascertain on the spot the validity of its complaints against the local authorities. He limited his attention into 'enquiring minutely into the condition and wants of the Ryots and the mode in which they paid their taxes',[3] and to

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1. Supplementary petition to the Imperial Parliament from the members of the Madras Native Association, and other Native inhabitants of the Madras Presidency, 21 May 1853, (Madras, 1853), pp 2 & 6.

2. Fourth petition to the Imperial Parliament from the members of the Madras Native Association, pp 10-3.

3. Minutes of Proceedings of the Second Annual General Meeting of the Bombay Association, (Bombay, 1855), p 84.

accomplish this he decided to visit the mofussil. The Madras Native Association welcomed his inquiry and deputed two of its leading members to accompany Seymour during his mofussil tour, partly to substantiate the grievances contained in its petition of 1852 and partly to demonstrate to Seymour that the association had acted with the tacit approval of the mofussil people. During his arduous tour, Seymour visited Cuddalore, Trichinopoly, Kumbaconam, Salem, Tinnevelly, Calicut and Mangalore. The reception accorded in these centres left few doubts as to the popularity that the Madras Native Association enjoyed in the mofussil: in many towns, the delegation was welcomed by mirasidars and ryots; verbal evidence of those interrogated by Seymour revealed a feeling of dissatisfaction amongst the people; and funds and petitions were freely presented to the deputation.[1] Indeed, what Seymour saw during this tour convinced him of the validity of 'the general complaints contained in the Native petition presented last year'.[2]

On his return to England, Seymour persuaded his colleagues in the Indian Reform Society to renew agitation for a fresh inquiry into Indian affairs. In July 1854, a motion was tabled in the Commons calling for a commission to investigate into the land tenure system in the Madras Presidency. Seymour, speaking on the motion, contended that such an inquiry, far from weakening 'the authority of the Government' in India, would demonstrate that 'the Government at home had a paternal feeling for the welfare of the people'. South India, according to Seymour, was

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1. The Athenaeum, 22 April 1854.

2. Hansard, cxxxv, p 65.

in 'a most miserable condition' and was 'a perfect disgrace to this country, and to every party who had ever had anything to do with India'. He traced much of the ills of Madras to excessive taxation. In the Presidency, he estimated that 'one-third of the best land was lying waste and untilled', while the peasants were seeking relief through emigration. He also referred to the use of torture in certain districts to extort revenues, a practice which Seymour attributed to excessive taxation levied under the ryotwari system.[1] Moved partly by the growing volume of protest both inside and outside Parliament, and partly by an inability to refute the allegations, Sir Charles Wood agreed to a local inquiry into the abuses connected with the collection of revenue in Madras.[2]

The Torture Commission, although its findings disappointed the Madras leaders, was perhaps the most positive gesture that the ruling authorities made in response to the agitation unleashed by the Madras Native Association and its allies in Parliament. Of greater significance was the era of reform that the Charter agitation inaugurated in South India. Sir Charles Wood, although a loyal defender of the Company during the India Bill debate of 1853, was nevertheless convinced of the need for reform. In Madras, he seized the opportunity of a change of Governors in 1854, when Lord Harris was sent out for his 'administrative ability', to 'infuse some new blood' into the administration of the Presidency. To help Harris in his mission, Wood outlined the main changes

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1. Hansard, cxxxv, pp 43-4 & 59-66.

2. Ibid., p 88.

that might be profitably introduced in Madras. Priority was to be given to public works, especially irrigation, and he assured the governor that funds would be made available.[1] On the question of land assessment, Harris was urged to undertake a survey on the 'Bombay model' prior to a general revision of assessment. After a year of discussion and review, these suggestions were accepted, with the Madras Government agreeing to a revenue survey, the reduction of assessment to 30 percent of the gross produce, and a greater outlay on public works.[2] In 1856, the 'ubiquitous' mutarpha tax, levied on weavers, artizans and petty traders, was abolished after an incident of torture in its collection had been brought to the notice of Parliament by the Madras Native Association.[3]

One controversial subject that continued to generate much heat throughout the 1850's was the question of proselytization. The Madras Native Association, while anxious during its early years not to exaggerate the importance of this issue, was eventually compelled to make a vigorous protest against the activities of the 'missionary party'. What prompted this protest was partly the operation of the grants-in-aid system, partly the rising tempo of missionary agitation during the Mutiny for confiscation of Indian religious endowments and the overthrow of secular education, and partly the outbreak of religious riots in Tinnevelly and Travancore in December 1858. Amidst this state of

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1. Wood Papers, Eur. MSS. F.78, Letter Book 5, Wood to Harris, 10 April 1854.

2. MRP, Range 282, Vol. 55, Minute of Consultation, 14 August 1855.

3. Fifth petition to the Imperial Parliament from the members of the Madras Native Association, 26 January 1856, (Madras, 1856), pp 5-6.

uncertainty, the Madras Native Association convened a public meeting in March 1859 to give expression to the religious fears of the Indian community. Attended by representatives from the mofussil, and drawing strength from the participation of the Muslims, the meeting endorsed a petition to the Secretary of State for India protesting against the continued official patronage of missionary operations and the unsatisfactory investigation into the Tinnevelly disturbance.[1] Sir Charles Trevelyan, who had assumed the governorship of Madras in March 1859, recognized the need to restore religious tranquility, and accepted the memorial as 'a genuine expression of the Native mind'.[2] His assurances, coupled with the decision to give protection to Indian religious institutions by enacting the Religious Endowments Act of 1863, created the basis for an enduring religious settlement in South India.

After almost a decade of sustained activity, the Madras Native Association disappeared from the political arena under circumstances shrouded in some mystery. However, a study of events during the 1850's seems to suggest that its demise was foreshadowed at a time when it was functioning in full vigour. Part of the difficulties of the Madras body lay in its relations with the local authorities. From its very inception, official attitude in Madras was one of undisguised hostility. The Crescent, which acted as the organ of the Madras Native Association, asserted in 1853 that government 'spies and informers' in the metropolis and the despotic behaviour of the mofussil officials severely impeded

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1. Memorial to the Right Honorable Lord Stanley, Secretary of State for India; from the members of the Madras Native Association and Others, 9 April 1859, (Madras, 1859), pp 3-32.

2. MPP, Range 249, Vol. 69, Minute by Trevelyan, 28 June 1859.

the activities of the association.[1] Following his visit to South India, Seymour observed that the Madras leaders were not receiving 'the good treatment they deserved nor were they held in the same estimation there as in England.[2] However, official antagonism towards the Madras Native Association did not manifest itself openly until the latter attempted to extend its organization to the mofussil. While accompanying Seymour in his mofussil tour, the representatives of the Madras body persuaded the leaders in certain towns, namely Cuddalore, Trichinopoly, Tinnevelly and Salem, to establish branch associations to transmit information and funds to the central body in the metropolis. These efforts provoked official enmity, and in South Arcot, where subscriptions were being raised, the Collector intervened to put an end to 'this Extortion'.[3]

However, a more effective way was found to destroy the organization that the Madras leaders were erecting in the mofussil. In February 1854, officials in Guntur district discovered that 'certain emissaries', claiming to represent the Madras Native Association, were raising subscriptions under promises of securing tax remission. The Madras Government called for a prompt inquiry and satisfied that these collections were 'a fraudalent extortion', it sought the permission of the Government Pleader, J.B. Norton, to prosecute the agents under Regulation X of 1816.[4] Norton dismissed the idea of prosecution, contending that

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1. Cited in The Spectator, 6 June 1853.

2. Minutes of Proceedings of the Second Annual General Meeting of the Bombay Association, p 83.

3. Wood Papers, Eur. MSS. F.78, No.32, Pottinger to Wood, 23 December 1853.

4. MRP, Range 282, Vol. 36, Minute of Consultation, 6 June 1854.

the agents had committed no crime. He regarded the contributions as a 'purely voluntary act', reminiscent of the sort of subscriptions raised by the Anti-Corn Law League in England.[1] Having failed to implicate the Madras Native Association in a legal proceedings, the local authorities decided to discredit the body by making the incident public. At the same time, mofussil officials were ordered to issue takids (injunctions or warnings) discouraging the payment of contributions to any private agents. The takids had the desired effect: collection of subscriptions came to an abrupt end; mofussil leaders were frightened into abandoning their relations with their metropolitan counterparts; and the branch associations gradually languished.[2]

If in the mofussil the Madras Native Association suffered from official harassment, in the metropolis its position was challenged by a rival faction. When the Madras Native Association was launched in 1852, there was some indication that factional differences would be subordinated to the need for unity during the Charter agitation. However, when the first petition to Parliament was being drafted, differences became apparent and two distinct factions emerged. A failure to compromise precipitated the split in November 1852 when the breakaway faction, under the leadership of C. Srinivasa Pillay and M. Venkataroylu Naidu, organized the Hindu Progressive Improvement Society. The apparent differences between the rival factions were ideological. While the Madras Native Association (as it emerged after the split) was primarily concerned in

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1. Ibid., J.B. Norton to Madras Government, 14 June 1854.

2. The Athenaeum, 13 July 1854.

political and economic change, its rival, the Hindu Progressive Improvement Society, became an ardent advocate of social change, especially the abolition of child marriage, female education and widow marriage.[1] Relations between the two groups were never cordial and, indeed, were periodically punctuated by open conflicts.

It should also be emphasized that the necessary educational base, so vital to sustain political activity in India, was virtually non-existent in Madras at this time. The failure of western education to make much headway during the 1840's and early 1850's, and the immediate absorption of the small educated elite into public service, failed to create 'a Class of Natives in independent circumstances' to organize a permanent political body. The merchants and mirasidars who dominated the Madras Native Association hardly entertained any ideas of a permanent organization to voice their sentiments. Indeed, when they accepted the invitation of the British Indian Association to form a branch body in February 1852, it was on the general assumption that it would only function for the period of Charter discussions.[2] That they decided to continue their agitation after 1853 sprung largely from their dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Charter negotiations. However, by the early 1860's, this feeling of dissatisfaction had given way to one of contentment and achievement, a change of attitude brought about by the inauguration of a period of radical administrative reform and the termination of the unpopular Company rule in 1858.

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1. Ibid., 24 January 1853.

2. The Spectator, 1 March 1852.

III

The demise of the Madras Native Association during the early 1860's meant the virtual extinction of organized political activity in South India for almost two decades. However, as this body was retreating into obscurity, the foundations were being laid for a new political grouping in Madras. The basis of this new grouping lay in western education, which was making rapid strides during the 1860's. With high schools and colleges springing up in the various centres of South India, the need for some form of intellectual and corporate activity among students led to the foundation of discussion classes, debating clubs and reading rooms. Students were encouraged to participate in debates and assume positions of responsibility in these societies. Though contentious political themes were ruled out, there were nevertheless adequate opportunities to discuss and exchange ideas on a wide range of subjects. It was in these college societies that the latent debating prowess and organizing capacity of Indian students were developed and found early expression.

To those graduating from colleges during the 'sixties and 'seventies after an active student life, the adult world in Madras provided few opportunities for intellectual or political stimulation. The absence of political organisations created a great void, though some educated Indians found an outlet in municipal politics, religious affairs, or voluntary and charitable work. The search for some kind of intellectual stimulation, however, led inexorably towards the formation of literary societies, debating clubs and reading rooms. By the late

'seventies, an expanding network of such societies had begun to link the main towns of South India,[1] providing the educated elite with a platform for a regular and orderly discussion of political and other topical issues. Although these societies existed precariously, often on shifting membership and erratic incomes, they were both a source of informed Indian opinion and the nursery of the political elite that assumed the mantle of leadership in Madras during the 'eighties.

Among the earliest ventures on these lines was the Madras Hindu Debating Society. Founded in 1852 by M. Venkataroylu Naidu, this body aspired 'to rouse the Hindoos from their apathy, and to infuse a taste for the improvement of their minds, as well as for the amelioration of their social, and moral conditions'.[2] It sought to cultivate amongst its members the art of speaking 'with ease and facility in public', while at the same time providing a forum for the discussion of subjects of 'immediate and practical interest to the community'. Distinguished functionaries were invited to deliver lectures, while regular debates were held in which the members of the society took an active part.[3] An integral part of this body was the Hindu Rading Room, designed primarily for 'the Mental and Moral Improvement of Hindu young men'. To encourage

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1. In 1885-6, for example, there were about 100 such societies strung over the entire Madras Presidency, with memberships ranging from 10 to 100. For a list of these known societies, see Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1885-86, pp XII-XIV.

2. The Sixth Annual Report of the Madras Hindoo Debating Society, from 1856-58, (Madras, 1859), p 8.

3. The Madras Times, 29 March 1864.

a habit for reading amongst the students, a library was erected and stocked with a modest collection of books, periodicals and newspapers. Evening classes for reading and discussion were also held, and they enjoyed large student support.[1] In 1856, the Hindu Reading Room had on its rolls a total of 85 members, some of whom were to achieve prominence in Madras politics during the 'eighties.[2]

Perhaps the best known of these societies in South India was the Triplicane Literary Society. Organized in 1874 by some graduates resident in what was reputed to be 'intellectually a great centre' of the metropolis,[3] this body acquired its own premises and built up a library on the basis of books and newspapers that the government and private beneficiaries chose to provide. Its early activities, limited largely to lectures and debates, provided a common forum for the meeting and exchange of ideas amongst the educated elite in the metropolis.[4] Amongst its active members were the 'six ardent youths' who launched The Hindu in 1878.[5]

Despite the emergence of literary, debating and reading room societies, and despite their efforts to provide a forum for the discussion of political themes, they never fulfilled the functions of an effective and vigorous political organization. Hence, whatever political

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1. The Third Annual Report of the Madras Hindu Reading Room, for 1855, (Madras, 1856), p 3.
2. Ibid., Appendix C.
3. The Hindu, 25 July 1898.
4. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 4 November 1879.
5. The Hindu, 21 September 1903.

activity there was in South India during the 'sixties and 'seventies proved to be spasmodic and individual-orientated in character, prompted as much by the efforts of a few as by the extreme unpopularity of certain official measures. The Hindu agitation against the Brahmo Marriage Bill of 1871[1] furnishes one example of unorganized political activity in Madras. Another example was the opposition against the Municipal Bill of 1876-7, when certain public-spirited citizens in the metropolis hastily convened a meeting to record their protest against the measure.[2]

The need for a political organization, to give direction and sustained stimulus to agitation in South India, had been recognized in Madras since the early sixties. In 1862, when the Madras Native Association was 'practically defunct', there were some deliberations among the Hindu leaders to organize a new association on 'proper principles' to voice the interests of the community, but nothing positive emerged.[3] Two years later, the idea of a political association was again canvassed both in the press and on the platform. S. Runga Chariar, a Veda Samajist, made a vigorous appeal to his fellow-graduates in the metropolis to stir themselves from their 'state of torpid slumber' and join the cause of 'Progress, national advancement, [and] national regeneration'.[4] In 1871, amidst the excitement caused by the Brahmo Marriage Bill, the demand for a political association was renewed. On this

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1. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 19 June 1871.
2. The Madras Times, 31 July 1877.
3. The Madras Times, 25 July 1862.
4. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 20 August 1864.

occasion, however, the discussion bore fruit when the Madras Native Association was resuscitated, but this revival proved to be a temporary affair as the body again retreated into obscurity after two months.[1]

The inadequacies resulting from this failure of the Madras leaders to organize a political association were sharply emphasized during the late 'seventies by the example of Bengal, where various organizations were displaying vigorous signs of political activity. Especially significant was the contribution of the Indian Association, which made its impact on the Indian arena by its determined opposition to the unpopular policies of the Lytton Administration. The reduction of the age of entry into the Covenanted Civil Service in 1876, the enactment of the Vernacular Press Act in 1878, and the remission of cotton duties a year later provided the issues around which the Indian Association was able to mount an All-India agitation. Invariably, the Madras leaders were asked to support the campaign. In January 1878, Surendranath Banerjea, a prominent member of the India Association, arrived in Madras to canvass support for the civil service agitation.[2] His plea for a public meeting in Madras City failed to materialize, and he had to be content with 'a conference of leading men'[3] which endorsed the resolutions of the Indian Association.[4] This was not the

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1. MLP, Vol. 1777, February 1883, Memorandum of A.LV. Ramana, 14 February 1883.

2. J.C. Bagal, History of the Indian Association 1876-1951, (Calcutta, n.d.), pp 13 & 31.

3. Surendranath Banerjea, A Nation in Making, (London, 1925), p 50.

4. A belated public meeting was held in Madras City on 30 January 1878, when a petition on the civil service issue was endorsed for submission to British Parliament through the Indian Association. The Madras Times, 31 January 1878.

only expression of political apathy in Madras. In 1878, when the Indian Association was directing a national campaign against the Vernacular Press Act, the Madras leaders refrained from registering any public protest against the measure.

If Bengal helped to emphasize the political apathy of Madras, an Englishman, paradoxically enough, became the most eloquent exponent for the establishment of a political organization in South India. William Digby,[1] the popular editor of the Madras Times, convinced that official policy was moving towards greater decentralization of power, called for a reconstruction of the structure of government to allow the greater participation of the non-official element. But the inchoate character of public opinion in Madras, and the failure of the non-official classes to be effectively organized, led Digby to advocate the formation of a strong political body. He was by no means despondent of the prospects of organizing such an association. 'There is a vast floating mass of opinion and sentiment', he wrote, 'which...might be crystallized, and made powerful for much beneficial action'.[2] When he first expounded his ideas in March 1877, Digby wanted a non-communal and broad-based organization, embracing both European and Indian communities in South India.[3] Realizing, however, that this proposal was rather

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1. William Digby (1849-1904), after a journalistic career in England and Ceylon, assumed editorship of The Madras Times in 1877. As secretary of the Madras Famine Relief Committee in 1878-9, he earned the gratitude of Madras and was awarded a C.I.E. On his return to England in 1879, he continued to plead India's cause, and for a time was actively connected with the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. The Hindu, Weekly Edition, 29 September 1904.

2. The Madras Times, 3 November 1877.

3. The Madras Times, 19 March 1877.

ambitious if not impractical, he modified his scheme in March 1878 when he suggested that a 'Native' association be formed along the lines of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha.[1]

Digby's plea was generally welcomed by the Indian press in Madras. The Madrassee, while echoing his sentiments, felt that the moment had come when 'the educated natives scattered throughout the Presidency should combine themselves into a strong association to watch over and protect the interests of the people'. Angered by the behaviour of the local authorities during the recent discussion of the Municipal Bill, when the legislature defied 'the unanimous voice of the Madras citizens and the unanimous voice of the native members', the Madrassee sought to remedy the evil through the formation of 'an active and respectable association', which can agitate incessantly and lay popular grievances before the Indian authorities, Parliament and the British public.[2] The Hindu, though not as emphatic in its response, also saw 'the necessity of combined action' in matters touching the country's welfare.[3]

As the demand for some form of political organization gained momentum, certain Indian leaders in the metropolis decided to resuscitate the defunct Madras Native Association. Discussions for its revival had started as early as April 1877, but it took almost four years before the actual process of resuscitation was completed, and even then under rather unostentatious circumstances. Amongst those actively associated in its revival were C.V. Runganada Sastri, V. Bhashyam

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1. Ibid., 23 March 1878.

2. Cited in The Madras Times, 20 April 1877.

3. Ibid., 9 June 1879.

Iyengar and Salem Ramasamy Mudaliar. Runganada Sastri,[1] a retired judge of the Small Cause Court, was elected President of the Madras Native Association, but on his death in July 1881 Bhashyam Iyengar assumed the mantle. Born in 1844 to a well-known Brahman family, Bhashyam Iyengar became a vakil after taking his law degree in 1869, and by the early 1880's was the unchallenged leader of the 'Native Bar' in Madras. In Salem Ramasamy Mudaliar,[2] the Madras Native Association found an energetic and conscientious secretary. Destined to take a prominent part in provincial and national politics, Salem Ramasamy Mudaliar earned a reputation for his keen political acumen, moderation and 'unostentatious perseverence'.

During its temporary resurgence in the early eighties, the Madras Native Association aspired to represent the political interests of the Indian community in Madras. It threw open its membership to both officials and non-officials, irrespective of their caste or communal affiliations, as its aim was to enrol every educated and prominent Indian in Madras City. By December 1881, when its headquarters were shifted from Mylapore to Mount Road, it had secured the accession of 'many learned and influential native gentlemen' in the metropolis.[3] In

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1. C.V. Runganada Sastri (1819-1881), the first Proficient of the Madras High School, was 'a brilliant example of self-made man'. A linguist and social reformer, he was appointed to the Madras Legislative Council in 1880. G. Paramaswaran Pillai, Representative Men of Southern India, pp 71-91.

2. S. Ramasamy Mudaliar (1852-1892), born into a wealthy landed family in Salem, established his practice in Madras City after a brilliant college career. In 1885, he represented Madras in the Indian delegation to England to advocate India's cause, but died prematurely in 1892. G. Paramaswaran Pillai, Representative Men of Southern India, pp 167-79.

3. The Madras Mail, 13 December 1881.

view of the official element, it was not surprising that the Madras Native Association emerged as a moderate body, cautious in its approach to political questions and conciliatory in its attitude towards the government. However, this did not mimimise its utility as a body reflecting the sentiments of an influential section of Indian opinion in Madras.

An organisation of a different political complexion was the Triplicane Literary Society, whose existence during the early 'eighties could be traced to its opposition to the moderate line of the Madras Native Association. Although founded as a forum for lectures and debates, the Triplicane Literary Society shed its literary and reading-room character and emerged as a full-fledged political organisation at a time when the cry for a political body began to be increasingly heard in the metropolis. Symptomatic of its transformation was the election of Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunatha Row[1] as President in September 1880. Although in official employment, Raghunatha Row had always displayed 'the courage of his convictions', and his unreserved criticism of government policies had repeatedly 'brought him into collision with the officials'.[2] One of the Vice-Presidents of the Triplicane Literary Society was P. Ananda Charlu, a vakil with a fairly lucrative practice in the metropolis. Born to a Brahman family of 'fairly affluent

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1. R. Raghunatha Row (1831-1912) came from a Mahratta Brahman family of 'illustrious Prime Ministers'. After completing his studies in the Madras High School, he entered public service in 1856, rose to become Deputy Collector, and retired in 1888 after twice serving as Dewan of Indore. Although connected with various public movements, his special interest was in social reform. South Indian Maharashtrians. Silver Jubilee Souvenir, (Madras, 1937), pp 85-6.

2. Blunt, op.cit., pp 38-40.

circumstances' in North Arcot in 1843, Ananda Charlu migrated to Madras City at an early age to pursue his studies where he met his disciple C.V. Runganada Sastri, from whom he cultivated 'his literary habits and his independence of character'. Endowed with a 'robust constitution' and an incisive mind, he emerged as a domineering personality in Madras politics for almost three decades.[1] Two other Brahmans who came to be closely identified with the Triplicane Literary Society during the early 'eighties were G. Subramania Iyer and M. Viraraghava Chariar. Unlike Raghunatha Row and Ananda Charlu, neither of these two Brahmans could boast of inherited wealth or a large income. G. Subramania Iyer was born in Tanjore district in 1855, two years before the birth of Viraraghava Chariar in Chingleput. Their paths merged in 1874 when they joined the Government Normal School in Madras City, and almost immediately they struck up a close friendship which was to endure for over two decades. In 1875, they qualified as teachers, and while Viraraghava Chariar entered the Presidency College to read an Arts degree, Subramania Iyer had to be content with becoming a teacher and taking his degree part-time. In 1877, having obtained an Arts degree, they joined the staff of Pacheappah College, and began to take an active part in the activities of the Triplicane Literary Society. In the following year, they launched The Hindu together with four other members of the Triplicane Literary Society.[2]

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1. For a succint biography of Ananda Charlu, see M. Venkatarangaiya (Ed.), The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh, I, (1800-1905), (Hyderabad, 1965), pp 235-44.

2. C.L. Parekh (Ed.), Eminent Indians on Indian Politics, with sketches of their lives, portraits and speeches, (Bombay, 1892), pp 429-32.

Neither the Madras Native Association nor the Triplicane Literary Society, despite their non-communal character, had much success in enlisting the support of the Muslim and Eurasian communities of South India. Political consciousness among the Muslims, or at least a capacity for organized action, found early manifestation during the 1870's. The formation of the Anjuman-i-Islamiah in 1876 was dictated as much by the anxiety to aid Turkey in overcoming external aggression as by the desire to promote Muslim interests in South India.[1] When Russia declared war on Turkey in 1877, the Muslim leaders devoted much of their energies towards raising subscriptions for the Turkish Relief Fund, and by August 1877 the Anjuman-i-Islamiah had remitted Rs 51,000 to Turkey.[2] However, with the termination of the war in 1878, when public interest became absorbed with the famine problem, the Anjuman-i-Islamiah lapsed into a period of inactivity.

In May 1881, with a renewed demand for its revival, the Anjuman-i-Islamiah was reorganised on 'a wider basis'. Its leaders were pledged 'to establish good fellowship between the different sects of Islam, and between the Mussulmans and members of other classes of the community', to eradicate 'such customs and usages as are injurious to Mussulmans', and to 'develop a spirit of Mussulman loyalty and submission towards the Crown'.[3] Humayun Jah Bahadur,[4] who claimed descent from the Prophet

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1. The Madras Times, 14 December 1876.

2. Ibid., 12 August 1877.

3. The Madras Mail, 17 May 1881.

4. Humayun Jah Bahadur (1837-93) was born and educated in Calcutta, and settled in Madras City in 1860. Endowed with 'shrewd common sense and a large fund of information', he was the Muslim member in the Madras Legislative Council for about 25 years. The Hindu, 16 December 1893.

and was closely related to the house of Tipu, was elected President of the body. The position of Secretary was filled by Ahmad Mohidin Khan, a member of the Prince of Arcot's staff, while Haji Mahomed Abdullah Badsha, a wealthy merchant, was nominated Treasurer. This reorganization, however, failed to impart any immediate vigour to the Anjuman-i-Islamiah, and little was heard of its activities during the next two years. Indeed, its period of lethargy was only broken when a rival body, called the Madras Branch of the Central Mahommedan National Association, was inaugurated in September 1883. These competing associations, in an effort to mobilize Muslim support, began to intensify their activities by establishing schools, founding charities and starting their own newspapers. With the formation of the Anjuman-i-Mufid-i-Ahla-i-Islam in 1885, the third Muslim body to be established in the metropolis, Muslim politics became largely an exercise in factional warfare, and the communal unity that many Muslim leaders aspired continued to elude them throughout the 'eighties.

The other minority in South India that displayed an early capacity for organized political activity was the Eurasian community. An East Indian Association, designed 'to protect and further the interests' of the community, was functioning in Madras City in 1862,[1] but little was heard of this body in subsequent years. However, the formation of the Anglo-Indian and Eurasian Association in Bengal in 1876 stimulated discussions for the creation of a similar body in Madras. Plans for its formation were finalized by March 1877,[2] but the preoccupation of its

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1. The Madras Times, 1 September 1862.

2. Ibid., 21 March 1877.

sponsors with getting official patronage and the intervention of famine, prevented the inaugural meeting to launch the association from taking place.[1] This failure did not dampen the enthusiasm of one of the strongest advocates of the Eurasian cause, David S. White,[2] who succeeded in formally inaugurating the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association of Southern India in October 1879.[3]

In organizing this body, White launched a two-pronged attack against the growing impoverishment of the Eurasian community. On the one hand, he was determined to wrest from the ruling authorities the legitimate rights of the Eurasians. Theoretically, Parliament had recognized the 'nationality, rights and privileges' of the Eurasians in India, but the policies of the Indian Government left White with the impression that the community was a victim of discrimination. For one thing, 'political representation' had been denied. White pointed out that the Eurasians, unlike the Muslims, did not enjoy a permanent seat in the Madras Legislative Council.[4] A more serious complaint was the charge that the Eurasians had been unfairly treated in the distribution of public appointments, largely owing to the mistaken notion that 'a native is none other than a Pure Asiatic'. As a 'permanently settled' community in India, White demanded 'a fair field' and the faithful implementation

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1. Ibid., 14 June 1878.

2. D.S. White (1832-1889), born and educated in Madras City, entered public service in 1854 and eventually became Assistant to the Director of Public Instruction. Determined to the point of being even dogmatic, he twice went to England to plead the Eurasian cause. The Madras Mail, 1 February 1889.

3. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 8 October 1879.

4. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 8 October 1879.

of the Act of 1870.[1] The other part of White's battle was waged against his brethren. He had little sympathy with the 'sickly sentimentalism' which led the Eurasian community to believe that its permanent home lay outside India. This attitude, White reasoned, had given the Eurasians the character of a 'floating' population, led them to neglect certain lucrative vocations, and reduced them to a state 'bordering on pauperism'. In launching the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association, he proclaimed 'self-help' as its motto, and was determined to inculcate in the community the 'habits of self-reliance, honesty, sobriety, thrift, and industry'.[2]

The Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association, while inviting 'every Eurasian and domiciled European' in South India to join, gave priority to the scheme for establishing agricultural colonies in an effort 'to root' the floating Eurasian population. Lands were acquired in Chingleput and Mysore, and an appeal was made to raise adequate capital. Efforts were also made to stimulate industrial education, with workshops started in the metropolis. White, who was President of the association from 1879 to 1889, travelled extensively throughout South India, exhorting Eurasian leaders to establish branches in areas where there was a sizeable Eurasian population. By October 1882, the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association had overcome many of its initial problems and entered a phase of consolidation. Four agricultural colonies had been started, 28 branches opened, and a capital of Rs 60,000 had been raised

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1. Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. No. 43588, Memorial of D.S. White to Secretary of State, 7 June 1883.

2. The Madras Standard, 1 April 1881.

to be expended on the various schemes of the association.[1]

The signs of emerging political consciousness during the early 'eighties were also evident in the mofussil, especially in the larger centres as Kumbaconam, Negapatam, Madura, Salem, Tinnevelly, Calicut, Chittoor and Cocanada. Possessing their own institutions of higher learning, these mofussil towns gradually came to inherit a small band of educated Indians around whom was erected a network of political associations. These bodies were generally modelled on the Madras Native Association, admitting both officials and non-officials, and endeavouring to represent the various communal and economic groups in the district. A number of mofussil organizations fell into this category, including the Tanjore People's Association, Native Association of Negapatam, Madura People's Association, Chittoor Native Association and Cocanada Literary Association. The most active, and in many ways typical, of the mofussil organizations was the Tanjore People's Association. Founded in May 1882, its declared objective was 'to promote all public interests, and especially those relating to the Tanjore district'. It admitted both officials and non-officials on payment of Rs 2 per annum, and within two years of its formation had 278 members on its rolls, including the leading Indian officials, pleaders, teachers, mirasidars and merchants.[2]

By the early 'eighties, a new era had dawned in South India, and political activity was beginning to flow increasingly through organized

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1. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 8 October 1882.

2. The Madras Times, 7 May 1884.

channels. Indicative of this resurgence of activity was the expanding network of political associations, often with similar aims and small memberships, that was linking the main centres of South India. Some of these bodies, as the Salem Mahajana Sabha, were the outgrowth of literary and reading-room societies, and their conversion was a reflection of the deepening political consciousness in Madras. Many of these associations, however, were formed independently of literary origins, largely under the leadership of the western-educated elite that was emerging in the larger centres of South India. The product of a generation of university education, and equipped with some knowledge of the intricacies of constitutional politics, this elite readily responded to the cry for organized political agitation. For some years, these associations lacked an element of stability and even functioned in virtual isolation of one another, neither maintaining any durable links nor pursuing any common political strategy. However, the events of 1882-4 transformed their complexion, strengthened their precarious existence and drew them closer together, thus forging the links of provincial unity which were a precursor to the formation of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in May 1884.

Chapter III

The Madras Mahajana Sabha and the Early Conferences

In 1881, when Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff assumed the governorship of Madras, political life in South India was generally languid and sluggish, and Madras still suffered the indignity of being called 'the sleepy hollow' of India. Efforts on the part of certain groups, notably the local press, to mobilize support for a strong and representative provincial organization had failed to strike a responsive chord. Hence, attempts towards the formation of political bodies lacked enthusiasm and conviction, and much energy was 'wasted in random and unorganised efforts often misdirected and abortive.' [1] In striking contrast to this, the years 1882-4 saw a resurgence of political activity in South India, caused partly by the general unpopularity of the Grant Duff Administration (1881-6), an era conspicuous for its administrative scandals as for its harsh legislative measures, and partly by the organized European attempts to frustrate the liberal policies of Lord Ripon. Under the impact of these developments, public opinion in South India began to crystallize and ultimately gave birth to the Madras Mahajana Sabha in May 1884.

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The feud between certain ryots and a tahsildar in the Chingleput district was the first of the many scandals that punctuated the Grant Duff era. Among the 'most backward' districts of the Presidency, and a frequent victim of monsoonal vagaries, Chingleput's agrarian problems were aggravated by the rack-renting practices of the absentee mirasidars. Not unnaturally,

1. The Hindu, 19 May 1881.

the Chingleput peasants had earned a certain notoriety for persistent defaults in the payment of assessment, and revenue officials were often compelled to use the 'coercive process' to recover the dues.[1] Indeed, the Chingleput scandal arose from an attachment of the property of some ryots of Vadagaput village, Conjeeveram taluk, in May 1881. The ryots alleged that this attachment was illegal, and was made in retaliation of their refusal to pay a bribe to the local tahsildar.[2] Failing to get redress from the district authorities, the ryots petitioned the Madras Government, which in turn ordered a local inquiry. The inquiry proved to be a protracted one, stretched over two months, summoned over 250 ryots to give evidence, and ultimately vindicated the tahsildar. The aggrieved ryots claimed that it was not an impartial inquiry, and those who failed to respond to the summonses to give evidence were arrested and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.[3]

It was at this juncture, when public opinion was showing signs of concern at the developments in Chingleput, that Grant Duff took over the reins of office. His arrival prompted a concerted appeal for an impartial inquiry to bring the Chingleput affair to a satisfactory conclusion. Grant Duff was urged to 'shake himself clear of his surroundings', especially the civil service, which subscribed to 'a blind belief in the infallibility of the district officials' and would 'scorn to entertain so monstrous an idea that "one of us" can do wrong.'[4] Early in December 1881, a small

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1. C.S. Crole, The Chingleput Manual, (Madras, 1878), p 67.
2. The Madras Times, 25 July 1881.
3. The Madras Mail, 23 November 1881.
4. Ibid., 23 November 1881.

deputation of Chingleput ryots called on the governor to lay their grievances in person.[1] But Grant Duff remained unaffected by these outside pressures and, to aggravate matters, gave free rein to officials in Chingleput to interdict those ryots who had levelled charges against the tahsildar. A victim of these proceedings was a village munsif who had submitted an adverse report on the conduct of the tahsildar. Dismissed from office, the munsif was subsequently arrested on charges of giving false evidence and sentenced to 18 months rigorous imprisonment.

Public feeling was outraged by the high-handed actions of the local officials, and rapidly lost patience with Grant Duff's 'passive policy'. The Hindu laid a large share of the blame on the governor, and expressed the belief that his inaction had allowed the affair 'to branch off into episodes, each sufficient to cast dirt on the fair face of British justice.'[2] In January 1882, despairing of any justice from the Grant Duff Administration, a Committee of six Indian leaders in the metropolis, including G. Subramania Iyer and R. Balaji Row,[3] was constituted to launch the 'Chingleput Ryots Relief Fund.' The appeal, directed towards Hindus and Muslims, aimed to raise funds to meet the trial expenses of those ryots who were already sustaining heavy losses owing to their enforced absence from their farms.[4] The contributions, deposited largely in The Hindu office,

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1. The Madras Mail, 8 December 1881.

2. Cited in The Madras Mail, 23 February 1882.

3. R. Balaji Row (1842-96), after passing his First Arts in Kumbaconam, migrated to Madras City to read law. On graduation in 1869, he set up a practice in the metropolis, and made 'a considerable fortune'. An active public figure, Balaji Row was for several years a member of the Madras Municipality. The Hindu, 3 February 1896.

4. The Madras Times, 28 January 1882.

were encouraging and by the beginning of March over Rs 900 had been collected.[1] The Chingleput affair dragged on until August 1882 when the tahsildar was convicted on a charge of stealing certain incriminating official documents. In the emerging relationship between the Grant Duff Administration and public opinion in Madras, the Chingleput episode constituted the first breach and undermined whatever initial confidence there was in the new governor.

An event which caused greater convulsion in Madras, and one in which the waywardness of the officials were mercilessly exposed, was the communal violence that flared up in Salem town in July-August 1882. The seeds of Hindu-Muslim tension in this 'straggling and extensive' town were sown in 1878 when the district collector permitted the erection of a mosque in 'a conspicuous part' that had long been 'a pathway of all the Hindu processions.'[2] The Hindus, resenting the enforcement of the official ban on music, appealed to the High Court to exercise a right that they had 'enjoyed from time immemorial.' The High Court ruled in their favour, and ordered the local magistrate to fix the hours when Hindu processions could pass the mosque with music.[3] Undecided between official regulations and High Court rulings, and showing neither firmness nor tact in settling the rival claims of the opposing factions, the Salem officials lost control over a rapidly deteriorating communcal situation. When serious communal rioting broke out in August 1882, the local authorities watched helplessly while an angry Hindu mob destroyed the mosque.

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1. The Madras Standard, 8 March 1882.
2. The Indian Law Reports, Madras Series, IV, 1883, pp 203-6.
3. Ibid., II, 1878-81, pp 140-3.

The Grant Duff Administration, convinced that the Salem outrage was a symptom of 'the rising spirit of religious intolerance and lawlessness' in South India, ordered a full-scale inquiry to bring the rioters to book. Lewis McIver, who led the investigations, uncovered a deep-laid conspiracy by a 'Hindu League' in Salem to destroy the mosque and attack 'the persons and property of Mussalmans.'[1] Total convictions arising from the Salem fracas, after revision by the High Court, stood at 154, of whom 15 were sentenced to transportation or long-term imprisonment and fines.[2] Retributive punishment, however, did not end here: civil and police officials were dismissed or down-graded on grounds of complicity or withholding information;[3] a special levy was imposed on a number of villages in and around Salem town to maintain a temporary Punitive Force in the district; and three elected Hindu Municipal Commissioners were dismissed without even a token opportunity to offer explanation. In its report of the Salem riots to the Secretary of State, the Madras Government asserted that the rioters had been prosecuted with 'the utmost vigour of the law.'[4]

Public opinion in Madras, whether Anglo-Indian or Hindu, did not accept the Salem verdict without recording a protest at certain revelations that emerged from the protracted trials. If the Anglo-Indian press was clearly sceptical of the official theory that the riots were the result of a deep-laid conspiracy, the Hindu response was one of shocked, if rather

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1. The Madras Times, 16 October 1882.

2. Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency during the year 1882-83, (Madras, 1883), p 19.

3. JPP, Vol. 94, No. 466, C.D. Maclean to Madras Government, 26 January 1883.

4. MJP, Vol. 2161, No. 1423-A, Madras Government to the Secretary of State, 30 May 1883.

naive, disbelief that the 'respectable gentry of Salem' could have conspired to perpetuate such a deed. The Hindu press asserted that the riots were 'the work of the vulgar mob' in Salem, while the conviction of 'respectable and honoured' Hindu leaders of Salem was deplored as a 'most severe and unjust punishment.' There were also rumblings that the government had charged 'the Hindoos with the whole blame of the matter', while absolving Muslims and the local officials of any responsibility.[1] Except for some doubts on the evidence given during the trials, and censuring Salem officials for 'gross carelessness', there was little in the early Hindu response either to shake the Salem judgement or provide the basis for a strong agitation to free the prisoners. The Salem affair was kept alive throughout 1883 partly by appeals to the High Court and partly by the Hindu press, but there appeared little prospect of the Madras Government relenting to this agitation. An appeal to Lord Ripon during his visit to Madras in January-February 1884, headed by a Salem memorial bearing 7,300 signatures,[2] was equally devoid of any immediate results.

Within weeks of Ripon's departure from Madras, the tide of fortune began to turn slowly in favour of those agitating for the release of the Salem prisoners. In February-March 1884, a Madras newspaper published certain confidential documents relating to the riots. Particularly unfortunate from the government's point of view was the revelation of Lewis McIver's letter to a member of the Madras Council, in which he urged the Madras Government 'to use every legitimate weapon' to uphold the integrity

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1. The Hindu, 25 January 1883.

2. The Madras Times, 15 February 1884.

of the Salem judgement. Written at a time when the Salem appeals were before the High Court, McIver wanted the Government Pleader 'to be stirred up' to counteract 'an unscrupulous section of the Bar', an High Court that had 'lately developed a weakness for "playing to the gallery", an ill-informed Press, and an easily-biassed society', all seeking to overturn the Salem sentences.[1] These disclosures confirmed what had long been a vague public suspicion, namely that 'the gentlemen employed by the Government to enquire into the case of the riots, one and all seem to have been animated by the desire, not to administer justice, but to get convictions.'[2]

The publication of McIver's letter was the first of the many setbacks that the Grant Duff Administration suffered over the Salem affair in 1884. The next blow was dealt by C. Vijiaraghava Chariar,[3] who successfully sued the Secretary of State in May 1884 for having been 'wrongfully, illegally and maliciously' removed from the Municipal Commission a year previously, and was awarded damages of Rs 100 and costs.[4] Heartened by this success, Vijiaraghava Chariar then decided to vindicate the innocence of his imprisoned compatriots by impugning the evidence of certain witnesses. The

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1. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 29 February 1884.

2. The Madras Times, 22 March 1884.

3. C. Vijiaraghava Chariar (1852-1944), popularly known as the 'Salem patriot', had settled here in 1878 as a pleader after graduating from Madras Presidency College. From the beginning, he had taken an active part in Salem politics, and in 1881 had helped to organize the Salem Mahajana Sabha. Sentenced to ten years' transportation during the Salem trials, his conviction was quashed by the High Court. For many years he featured prominently in provincial and national politics, and in 1920 was elected President of the Indian National Congress. The Hindu, 21 April 1944.

4. The Madras Times, 6 May 1884.

perjury trials were held in July 1884, and seven were found guilty and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.[1] By this time, with the Salem judgement severely undermined, public clamour for the release of the prisoners was heard not only in Madras but throughout the sub-continent. With mounting agitation from the press, and sustained pressure from Lord Ripon, the Madras Government capitulated and ordered the release of the Salem prisoners in October 1884, thus bringing to a close an issue that had convulsed Madras politics for over two years, and deepened the estrangement between the Grant Duff Administration and public opinion in Madras.

The unpopularity of the Grant Duff Administration, however, did not stem solely from its mishandling of the Chingleput scandal and the Salem riots. Estrangement was further caused by certain legislative measures which interfered with long recognized communal rights, increased the arbitrary powers of the officials, and inflicted more severe punishments on those violating these laws. Some of these enactments, though accepted in principle by enlightened Indian opinion, aroused widespread opposition because their implementation appeared to be needlessly harsh. The Forest Act of 1882, for example, led to an over-zealous band of officials invading the rural areas, depriving villagers of their rights of fuel and pasture, enclosing common lands and impounding cattle straying into reservations.[2] There was the same harshness in the enforcing of the Salt Act of 1882, a measure which conferred officials with powers to search houses without

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1. The Madras Mail, 16 July 1884.

2. W.S. Blunt, who visited Madras in 1883, observed that the enforcement of the Forest Act was 'needlessly violent'. W.S. Blunt, op.cit., p 241.

warrants, arrest and detain suspects, and demand from magistrates more stringent penalties for offenders.

A measure that was neither liberal in conception nor carrying any conviction of necessity was the Kudimaramat Bill. Prompted by the recommendations of the Indian Famine Commission, the Madras Government sought to revive 'the custom of statute labour' to repair the neglected minor irrigation works in the Presidency. The Bill provided for the recruiting of unpaid labour for the 'timely repairs' of bunds that were breached, and to clear vegetation around sluices and channels of tanks. The right to commute labour in money payment was recognized, but the Bill disallowed any intervention by the civil courts in the issues arising out of its working.[1] When the Bill was published in May 1883, there was a strong protest both in the press and by political bodies in South India. Agitation was intensified during Ripon's visit to Madras, and this persuaded Grant Duff to abandon the Bill. These legislative measures eroded whatever vestige of popular confidence there was in the Grant Duff Administration. Some of the press comments reflected the growing estrangement between the government and public opinion. The Hindu, in reviewing Grant Duff's governorship in March 1884, asserted that his was 'a singularly weak Government, distinguished neither for administrative ability nor regard for the requirements of honest public service.'[2] Commenting on his five-year rule, the Karnataka Prakasika observed: 'Never has the Presidency of Madras been so

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1. MLP, Vol. 1777, No. 95, A Bill for the regulation and enforcement of Kudimaramat or unpaid village labour in the Presidency of Fort St. George.

2. Cited in The Madras Mail, 19 March 1884.

troubled and distressed as during the Grant Duffian era.'[1]

Political convulsions in Madras at this time did not spring solely from the errors of the Grant Duff Administration. Lord Ripon's decision to introduce the Ilbert Bill in February 1883, aimed to remove 'the absolute race disqualification' from Indian judges in the mofussil to try Europeans on criminal charges, caused a degree of political turmoil that had few parallels in the history of the Raj.[2] Moved partly by a genuine alarm that their liberties and lives were being imperilled, and partly by the desire to stem the tide of liberalism that was sweeping India, the non-official Europeans organized a determined and massive campaign to frustrate the Ilbert Bill. Originating in Bengal, where an European demonstration was held in February 1883 under the aegis of lawyers, planters and journalists, the latent forces of European discontent crystallized into the Anglo-Indian Defence Association, formed to collect funds and mobilize support both in Indian and England. In Madras, where European opposition to the Bill was 'deep, bitter, and enduring', a protest memorial was circulated for signatures in April 1883.[3] Much of the early opposition was founded on the assumption that Indians were unfit to deserve this concession. This attitude, coupled with that of suspicion and jealousy, led to the abuse of the Indian, his character, morals and habits. However, by August 1883, there was a change of strategy, with much of the abuse being henceforth directed against the Liberal Government in England and the Viceroy. The

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1. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, Week-ending 14 August 1886, p 6.

2. For a succint discussion of the Ilbert Bill agitation, see S. Gopal, The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon 1880-1884, (Oxford, 1953), Chapter IX.

3. The Hindu, 5 April 1883.

new tactics saw the boycotting of the viceregal functions, threats of violence to the person of the Viceroy, and even open insult to Ripon.[1] What came to be regarded as the 'White Mutiny', actively encouraged by a large body of officials in high positions, continued uninterrupted throughout 1883, enlisting strong support of the press in England, and ultimately extorting a compromise from Ripon.

Indian opinion in Madras, especially emanating from the press, was almost unanimously hostile from the beginning to any suggestion of a compromise. In part, this attitude stemmed from the belief that the principle embodied in the Ilbert Bill was just, unassailable and did not give 'much room for compromise.' The Hindu, for example, asserted that the principle underlying the Bill was too 'simple and fundamental' to permit any viable compromises. While admitting that certain details might be improved during the final drafting of the Bill, it was sceptical whether any alteration could be made that was both acceptable to the Europeans and would retain 'the entire principle' of the measure.[2] The Hindu Reformer and Politician, echoing almost similar sentiments, believed that any form of compromise would 'virtually defeat the principle of the Bill.'[3] But Indian reaction to the measure was also influenced by European agitation. Outraged by the violent attacks that had been levelled against their character and competence, Indians tended to dismiss European objections to

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1. Christine Dobbin, 'The Ilbert Bill: A Study of Anglo-Indian Opinion in India, 1883,' Historical Studies. Australia and New Zealand, XII, No. 45, October 1965, pp 98-9.

2. The Hindu, 19 July 1883.

3. The Hindu Reformer and Politician, II, June 1883, p 733.

the Bill as 'based upon prejudice, self-pride, and arrogance.'[1] To compromise and conciliate such agitation appeared to Indian opinion to be 'unfortunate' if not 'disastrous'. 'Without achieving therefore any good,' argued The Hindu, 'a compromise will lower the prestige of Government in the eyes of the people...It will create a belief that the admitted interests of justice and good administration have been sacrificed to the selfish clamour of a few planters.'[2]

However, when the vicissitudes of the Ilbert Bill affair produced the Concordat of December 1883, an event hailed by the Englishman as 'the surrender of the Viceroy and Mr. Ilbert to the Defence Association', there was understandable disillusionment among the Indian supporters of the measure. Having assumed an uncompromising posture, Indians were quick to criticize the amended Bill as a 'mangled skeleton' and 'a veritable apology for the proposed measure.'[3] But what caused indignation in Madras was the manner in which the final settlement was reached. Especially painful was the decision of the Indian authorities to initiate negotiations with the Anglo-Indian Defence Association. 'That an irresponsible body of men,' moaned The Hindu, 'should dictate the policy of a civilised and responsible Government is without a parallel even in the history of this country.'[4] Moreover, Ripon was charged of introducing the dangerous precedent of 'Government by Compact.' 'There is no denying,' observed The Hindu, 'that a compact had been made, that a novelty had been introduced into the

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1. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, June 1883, p 7.
2. The Hindu, 28 June 1883.
3. The Hindu, 5 December 1883.
4. Ibid., 23 January 1884.

administration of this country.'[1]

However painful and disappointing was this setback, the Ilbert Bill affair was not without its 'political significance' to the leaders in Madras. On the one hand, the episode revealed the weight of forces that stood opposed to Indian reform. Firstly, there were the non-official Europeans in India. Essentially 'birds of passage', they were determined during their Indian sojourn 'to make as much money as they can, to enjoy as much privilege as they can, to wield as much power as they can.' Though numerically small in comparison to the Indian masses, the non-official Europeans formed a compact force, held together by bonds of common self-interest, and having the ear of the ruling authority in India. Then, there was the 'heaven-born' civil service, with entrenched powers and privileges, and displaying an increasingly 'dictatorial and unconciliatory' spirit. Described by the Indians as 'a complete bureaucracy', responsible only to an India Council which was also its most loyal defender, the civil service was regarded by Indian leaders as a more formidable opponent of 'native interests'.[2] If in isolation each of these two groups were 'a stronghold of influence' with their own 'mighty organisation and extensive resources', in conjunction they had the capacity to frustrate Indian advancement, as indeed they demonstrated during the Ilbert Bill agitation.[3] Finally, there was the hindrance imposed by the very nature of the party system in England. For electoral and other reasons, the two dominant political parties in England had drawn the limits 'beyond which native progress is not to

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1. Ibid., 28 January 1884.

2. The Hindu, 7 June 1883.

3. Ibid., 23 January 1884.

be allowed to trespass.' During times of crisis, The Hindu argued, both parties 'did not hesitate to make a scapegoat of India.'[1]

While the old notions of dependence upon the goodwill of enlightened officials in India and Liberal supporters in England began to lose much of their former validity, it became apparent to the Indian leaders in Madras that the moment had arrived to devise some new and more effective instruments to advance their interests. Inherent to this new thinking was the doctrine of self-reliance and the realization for the need for greater organization. The European triumph in the Ilbert Bill had amply demonstrated 'the powers of combination for public purposes', while at the same time it convinced Indian leaders that their interests were 'distinct from those of the Anglo-Indians.' Moreover, this episode had 'stirred the feelings of the people' and rallied 'to some extent the scattered energies of intelligent Hindus' in the country.[2] Indeed, the various sections of Indian society were beginning to show a greater desire 'to understand one another, to act in union, and to promote their common interests.'[3] The problem now was whether there was 'enough of patriotism, organisation and money' to embark on this fresh departure. While The Hindu admitted that those 'fit to lead and command the nation' had yet to emerge on the scene, it was optimistic that this problem would be overcome 'with the development of the present state of the national mind.'[4] These expectations were not misplaced as the events of 1884-5 were to show. The formation of the

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1. Ibid., 14 April 1884.
2. Ibid., 2 August 1883.
3. The Hindu, 15 February 1884.
4. Ibid., 14 April 1884.

Madras Mahajana Sabha in May 1884 was the first significant outcome of the new forces released in South India by the political convulsions of the recent years.

II

If Indian thinking in Madras had come to accept the need for an organization to embrace the political interests of the entire Presidency, there was also a clearer awareness of the problems that would have to be resolved before embarking on this venture. In essence, the main problem was one of contact, mutual trust and confidence. Invariably, much of the initiative and direction to launch such an organization must come from the metropolitan leaders, but their ability to do so depended largely on the degree of support forthcoming from the mofussil, especially from the expanding network of local associations that were linking the main centres. Indeed, the success of the venture depended not so much in the supplanting of these local bodies but rather their willingness to give allegiance to the new organization and to subordinate their local interests to the overriding cause of provincial unity. That this important political fact was grasped is demonstrated by the earnest efforts that the metropolitan leaders made during the years 1882-4 to explore and enlist the support of the mofussil associations to advance certain common political objectives. In this way, the virtues of joint political action were emphasized and links between the scattered associations of the Presidency were strengthened, and this informal provincial unity and <u>rapport</u> proved vital in the formation of the Madras Mahajana Sabha.

The first exploratory steps towards establishing closer links between the metropolitan and mofussil associations were taken in July 1882 when the

Madras Native Association attempted to ascertain 'public feeling' towards Ripon's celebrated Resolution on Local Self-Government. A questionnaire was prepared by the Madras Native Association, eliciting information on the various aspects of local government, and was widely circulated to all political bodies and influential leaders throughout the Presidency. At the same time, it sent G. Subramania Iyer on a political tour to the main towns of the southern Tamil districts to mobilize public support for Ripon's scheme. His mission of July-August 1882, when he visited Cuddalore, Kumbaconam, Mayaveram, Negapatam, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Chidambaram, Dindigul, Madura, Tuticorin and Tinnevelly, created 'a degree of interest which has exceeded all expectation.'[1] The local associations co-operated willingly by convening public meetings to discuss the local self-government proposals, while others sent written replies to the questionnaire of the Madras Native Association. On the basis of these submissions, which reflected a general unanimity as to how Ripon's scheme ought to be implemented, the Madras Native Association drafted its memorandum of December 1882.[2]

G. Subramania Iyer's mission to the mofussil centres had a deeper significance than gauging public reaction to the Local Self-Government proposals. As the editor of the most influential newspaper in Madras, and one who had earned more than a local reputation for his vigorous advocacy of Indian interests, his visit was seized upon by the mofussil leaders to

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1. Proceedings of the Madras Native Association on the resolution of the Government of India on Local Self-Government, (Madras, 1883), p 2.

2. Proceedings of the Madras Native Association on the resolution of the Government of India on Local Self-Government, pp 1-26.

establish personal contact and exchange views on issues of mutual interest. At the same time, his political speeches created something of 'a sensation' in the mofussil. He emphasized the importance of Ripon's scheme for the country, especially to lay 'the foundation of the great future Representative Government.'[1] His audience 'listened with bated breath to his exposition of the powers of the public, the benefits of democracy.' Indeed, this was 'the first occasion when South India was visited by a political lecturer from Madras or elsewhere. A new vision was opened to the people.'[2]

The rather tenuous links that the Local Self-Government issue had helped to establish between the metropolitan and mofussil organizations were strengthened in April 1883 when the former decided to canvass support for a memorial calling for an extension of Lord Ripon's viceroyalty. The idea owed its origin to a Poona newspaper, the Mahratta, and the Bombay leaders blazed the trail by holding a meeting in February 1883. Wishing to emulate Bombay, the leaders in Madras City constituted a small committee, with Salem Ramasamy Mudaliar as secretary, to make arrangements for a similar meeting in Madras City. The Committee invited the participation of the various political associations throughout the Presidency, either by sending delegations to the metropolis or by holding simultaneous meetings in their respective centres.[3]

The meeting of 21 April, the first of a series of demonstrations to punctuate the political scene in Madras during the eventful months of 1883-4, was held amidst much excitement. A week prior to the meeting, 'placards

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1. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 29 August 1882.
2. The Hindu, 7 October 1928.
3. The Madras Times, 7 May 1884.

and small fly-leaves' in English and the regional languages were freely distributed announcing the event, while notices were 'pasted on walls in the busiest centres of the city.' The demonstration was attended by the leaders of all shades of Indian political opinion in the metropolis, while the mofussil was represented by delegations from Coimbatore and Negapatam. Telegrams and letters, expressing sympathy with the movement, were received from several mofussil associations. The meeting vindicated the actions of Lord Ripon and expressed full confidence in his viceroyalty. It was resolved that Ripon's rule had been 'conspicuously marked by an earnest desire to promote the material, intellectual and political condition of the people of India', including the abolition of 'distinctions and disabilities founded simply on considerations of race, creed or colour.' A memorial to the Queen was adopted, seeking the extension of Ripon's viceroyalty by a further term, in order to enable him 'to carry out to completion the various measures of reform which he has with such statesman-like foresight inaugurated.'[1]

On the day after this event, the Triplicane Literary Society, at a special meeting, decided to celebrate the first anniversary of Ripon's Local Self-Government Resolution by holding a similar demonstration in the metropolis on 18 May 1883. A sub-committee was formed, and political bodies throughout the Presidency were urged to send delegates to the meeting or celebrate the occasion in their respective towns and villages.[2] The response to this call was not as encouraging as had been anticipated, as neither mofussil associations nor the Muslim and Eurasian leaders in the

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1. The Hindu, 26 April 1883.

2. The Hindu Reformer and Politician, II, June 1883, p 678.

metropolis attended the demonstration. However, the occasion was observed by a number of towns in the mofussil, where meetings were held and resolutions adopted.[1]

This demonstration, attended by the articulate section of the metropolitan Hindus, focused interest on an issue that had been fairly prominent in Madras politics since G. Subramania Iyer visited the Tamil districts in 1882. Fittingly enough, he was the main speaker on this occasion, and while elaborating the manifold benefits that had flowed from Ripon's far-sighted scheme, he especially emphasized the 'sense of union and responsibility' that it had imparted to the people. Over-stressing perhaps the impact of the scheme on Madras politics, he asserted that the seeds it had sown would soon 'acquire wider and wider development, gathering strength and permanence as it grows, and bringing to bear on the conduct of administration, the wholesome force of strong public opinion.' On the importance of 'gathering in the metropolis leading Native gentlemen from all parts of the Presidency to discuss questions affecting the public weal', Subramania Iyer betrayed no lack of accurate judgement. He was convinced that such contacts, if periodical, would go a long way towards diffusing 'patriotism and liberality of thought' and 'unifying and strengthening public opinion' in the country.[2]

The experience of organizing these joint political demonstrations, and a greater awareness of the difficulties that were peculiarly inherent in such efforts, convinced the more far-sighted metropolitan politicians that some provincial organization, acting as a central and unifying agency,

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1. The Hindu, 31 May 1883.

2. The Madras Standard, 21 May 1883.

ought to be established to speak for the heterogeneous associations that were springing up in South India. Neither the Madras Native Association nor the Triplicane Literary Society was able to speak with authority for the entire Presidency nor did they succeed in enlisting the allegiance of the various local bodies. Indeed, the very fact that the metropolis had two political organizations, working for broadly similar objectives, seemed to belie whatever ambitions that they might have had to represent the Presidency as a whole. Short of one group voluntarily disbanding its organization to join forces with the other, a course rather unlikely, the search for a provincial organization depended on a fresh start which took into account the existing political realities in the Presidency. Two developments in the latter months of 1883, however, left the latter as the only viable option.

The first development was the growing hostility of the Madras Government towards political bodies in the metropolis. Since the early months of 1882, when the government came under mounting public criticism, relations between the Grant Duff Administration and the metropolitan politicians were strained. This jeopardized continued official participation in politics, and especially affected was the Madras Native Association, which had a large official element within its ranks. 'Because the Government has of late become so jealous of any public spirit among Native gentlemen', lamented The Hindu in November 1883, 'that those who are anxious to stand well in the estimation of Government shrink from taking part in public movements.'[1] W.S. Blunt, a British parliamentarian who visited Madras at

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1. The Hindu, 14 November 1883.

this time, drew a similar conclusion. 'The natives in the public service', he recorded in his diary, 'are completely under the thumb of the Government, and unless they have means of their own dare not offend their English superiors.'[1] In February 1884, a Bombay paper asserted that Grant Duff was contemplating a prosecution 'for sedition against the Native members of the Cosmopolitan Club, Madras, for discussing politics within the precincts of the club.' Although the India Office refused to give credence to this story,[2] the Madras Mail asserted that the report, 'however improbable it looks, has obtained wide currency.'[3]

As Indian officials were withdrawing from the political arena, a controversy concerning the farewell reception to a departing official heightened the need for an organization that could speak unequivocably for the entire Presidency. In November 1883, a preliminary meeting, convened by G.N. Gajapati Row,[4] T. Muthusamy Iyer, the first Indian to be elevated to the Madras High Court, and Humayun Jah Bahadur, decided to hold 'a public entertainment' in honour of D.F. Carmichael, the retiring Member of the Governor's Council. A sub-committee was formed to convene a public

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1. W.S. Blunt, op.cit., p 40.

2. Hansard, cclxxxv, p 218.

3. The Madras Mail, 27 March 1884.

4. G.N. Gajapati Row (1828-1903), born into a wealthy zemindari family, had much of his education in Calcutta. On his return to Vizagapatam in 1849, he devoted his energies to the management of his estates. He served in the Madras Legislative Council for almost 16 years, and for his public services he was knighted in 1902. A. Vadivelu, The Aristocracy of Southern India, II, (Madras, 1908), pp 10-3.

meeting to raise subscriptions and finalize plans for the occasion.[1] The decision provoked an immediate uproar, with The Hindu denouncing the idea on the grounds that Carmichael's public services did not deserve the honour. Carmichael's omissions and commissions were discussed at length, including his opposition to the Ilbert Bill and his acquiescence in the Chingleput and Salem episodes.[2] The sponsors of the reception were urged to abandon the 'odious movement' and refrain from making 'native demonstrations such cheap articles.'[3] Lest the advice be not heeded, a meeting of 60 Indians, held in virtual secrecy on 28 November, warned Carmichael's supporters against precipitating 'a direct and open collision' by claiming that they were acting on behalf of the public at large.[4]

The warning, however, was ignored by the supporters of Carmichael, who held a further meeting on 1 December to complete arrangements for the reception. Presided over by P. Ananda Gajapati Raz,[5] the Maharajah of Vizianagram, and attended by T. Madava Row,[6] D.S. White, R. Raghunatha Row and V. Bhashyam Iyengar, the meeting was seized upon by the speakers to justify the necessity for a public honour to Carmichael. While the

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1. The Madras Standard, 14 November 1883.

2. The Hindu, 14 November 1883.

3. Ibid., 16 November 1883.

4. The Madras Times, 17 December 1883.

5. P. Ananda Gajapati Raz (1850-1897), popularly known as 'Prince Charming', succeeded his father as Maharajah of Vizianagram in 1878. Wealthy and generous, he was 'the liberal patron of public movements and of public institutions.' The Madras Mail, 25 May 1897.

6. T. Madava Row (1828-1891), son of a Dewan of Travancore and cousin of Raghunatha Row, became successively Dewan of Travancore, Indore and Baroda. Called the 'Turgot of India', he retired from service in 1882. The Madras Times, 6 April 1891.

Maharajah of Vizianagram lauded Carmichael's 'strong advocacy of the native cause', T. Muthusamy Iyer praised his efforts to uphold 'the prestige of the Native aristocracy' of South India.[1] The claim that the meeting did not enjoy the support of the public was repudiated. The Rajah of Pittapur, while supporting the idea of a public reception, asserted that he was 'not aware of any movement of recent years which has as largely partaken of this national characteristic as this movement.'[2]

Failing to prevent the reception becoming a public demonstration, the anti-Carmichael faction was driven into making 'an appeal to the public.' A committee was formed to ascertain mofussil reactions and indications of opposition to the reception led to the convening of a public meeting on 15 December to discuss 'the public character' of Carmichael. Attended by P. Ananda Charlu, P. Rungiah Naidu,[3] G. Subramania Iyer, Salem Ramasamy Mudaliar and R. Balaji Row, the meeting resolved that Carmichael's public services 'have not been such as to entitle him to any special recognition.'[4]

This breach between the rival factions went deeper than their apparent failure to estimate the worth of Carmichael. To a large extent, Carmichael's supporters were regarded as the conservative element in Madras politics. Men of wealth and high social position, being zemindars or high officials, they belonged to a generation which received its educational

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1. The Hindu, 5 December 1883.

2. The Madras Times, 3 December 1883.

3. P. Rungiah Naidu (1828-1902), a Proficient of the Madras High School, was among the earliest vakils to be enrolled in the High Court. A wealthy landholder, he abandoned the legal profession to manage his estates and participate in public affairs. He served for many years in the Madras Municipality, and between 1893-9 held an elective seat in the Madras Legislative Council. The Hindu, 8 August 1902.

4. The Madras Standard, 17 December 1883.

training in the Madras High School. Though not always opposed to reforms, their conservative instincts and a sense of loyalty to the British Raj muted their demands and inhibited their actions. The anti-Carmichael faction, on the other hand, belonged to a different generation and possessed neither the wealth nor the high official status of their opponents. Educated at Madras University after the Mutiny, they were largely left 'to shift for themselves' in the search for lucrative employment. They showed less reverence for the 'autocratic' Raj, and during the 'eighties they emerged as 'the new school of politicians' demanding radical administrative reforms. Being 'strong in numbers, in intelligence, in hope and in energy', they attacked 'the foibles of the older men, some of whom assiduously paid pujah to officials, sometimes at the sacrifice of great public interests.'[1] Between these rival factions, there existed 'a deep chasm'[2] and, viewed in this light, the Carmichael affair was no more than an open expression of their deep-seated differences.

The significance of this conflict, among other things, was to emphasize the necessity for more cohesive and tighter organizations in Madras. Neither the Madras Native Association nor the Triplicane Literary Society fulfilled these requirements as their virtual impotence during the Carmichael affair showed. The Madras Native Association was sharply divided on the issue, with its President and Secretary finding themselves in opposing camps. The Triplicane Literary Society, although it supported the anti-Carmichael faction,[3] was unable to restrain its President from actively

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1. C. Karunakara Menon, A critical essay on Sir. A. Seshia Sastri, K.C.S.I., (Madras, 1903), pp 29-30.

2. The Hindu, 28 June 1883.

3. Ibid., 17 December 1883.

participating in the Carmichael reception. Amidst this state of indecision by the two leading metropolitan associations, a debate started as to which of the rival factions enjoyed popular support. The Hindu, speaking for the anti-Carmichael faction, asserted that its position was founded on the 'full and accurate knowledge of the feeling of the great mass of people.' As for the pro-Carmichael supporters, The Hindu regarded them as 'isolated individuals, distracted from society, having no obligation to their fellow-citizens.'[1] Such claims, confusing and inconclusive, strengthened the belief that articulated opinion demanded something more tangible than the loose and shifting sands of individuals, factions and public meetings.

It was the anti-Carmichael faction that took the decisive step to organize a cohesive association to represent the political interests of South India. The general impotence of the metropolitan organizations, and repeated promptings from English sympathizers to form some organization 'to watch the administration of the districts and bring to light any failure of justice or grievance of the people,'[2] eventually persuaded the more radical of the metropolitan politicians into taking some positive action. In January 1884, the preliminary steps were completed to launch the Mahajana Sabha, with the co-operation of the mofussil associations. R. Balaji Row, who had featured prominently in the Chingleput and Carmichael episodes, was appointed Provisional Secretary and was entrusted with the task of ascertaining the reaction of the local bodies throughout the Presidency to the proposed association. The early indications appeared to be favourable,[3] but

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1. The Hindu, 14 November 1883.

2. Ibid., 14 November 1883.

3. The Madras Times, 7 February 1884.

it was the visit of Lord Ripon to Madras in January-February 1884 that provided the much-needed opportunity to mobilize mofussil support for the proposed provincial organization.

Interest surrounding Ripon's visit to Madras, on his way to attend the Nizam's installation at Hyderabad, was partly heightened by the determination of the Indian leaders to demonstrate their confidence and loyalty to a Viceroy who was in recent months a target of sustained European criticism. The enthusiastic welcome that greeted Ripon during his recent visits to Allahabad and Calcutta provided a precedent that the Madras leaders wished to emulate. A committee had been formed in Madras City in early January to initiate plans for Ripon's welcome,[1] but there was speculation whether the 'rather wide gulf' that the Carmichael affair produced would stand in the way of a united Indian demonstration.[2] However, as the day of Viceroy's visit drew closer, tension began to subside and the public meeting of 19 January, to finalize arrangements for Ripon's reception, healed the wounds and reunited the rival factions.

The meeting, attended by all political groups in the metropolis and presided over by Madava Row, resolved to give the Viceroy's party 'a suitable reception at their landing' and 'a public entertainment' during their stay in the city. It was also agreed that an Indian deputation should present an address 'setting forth the views and wishes of the native community, in regard to the general administration of the country.' A large Ripon Reception Committee, drawn from all shades of Indian political opinion in Madras City and with P. Ananda Charlu as secretary, was

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1. The Madras Times, 7 January 1884.

2. The Madras Standard, 28 January 1884.

constituted to complete arrangements for the reception.[1] Every effort was made to mobilize public support for a massive demonstration. Invitations were sent to the Indian 'notables' in South India, including the members of the landed aristocracy. At the same time, the various local associations in the Presidency were asked to co-operate, either by sending deputations to the metropolis or by organizing celebrations in their respective centres to mark the occasion.[2]

The warm and enthusiastic demonstration exceeded even the expectations of the Ripon Reception Committee. Madras City shed its habitual inertia and turned out in large numbers to welcome the Viceroy, either by crowding the pier to see Ripon come ashore or by lining the decorated streets through which the Viceroy's cavalcade passed on its way to Government House. Celebrations were organized in almost every district, taking the form of street illuminations, erection of triumphal arches, acts of charity, or special temple services. Certain mofussil towns, namely Bellary, Chittoor, Coimbatore, Kumbaconam, Madura, Negapatam and Salem, responded to the invitations of the Ripon Reception Committee by sending deputations to the metropolis. Except for the non-official Europeans, who were 'conspicuous by their absence',[3] Ripon's visit had stirred 'a state of enthusiasm' that had few precedents in Madras.[4] Indeed, as Grant Duff observed, Ripon was 'as well received by the population as Vishnu himself could have been -

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1. The Madras Mail, 22 January 1884.
2. The Madras Times, 30 January 1884.
3. The Hindu, 3 March 1884.
4. The Madras Times, 31 January 1884.

probably better.'[1]

The Ripon celebrations, however, were more than a mere demonstration of welcome to a popular Viceroy. They revealed, on the one hand, the rapidity with which the political forces in South India were coalescing, partly under the impact of Ripon's liberal policies and partly as a result of the estrangement between public opinion and the Grant Duff Administration. The numerous addresses that the various local associations presented to Ripon not only voiced 'certain grievances felt by the whole country at large' but also reflected a surprising degree of 'unanimity' in their emphasis and content. Almost every address protested against the harsh legislative measures of the recent years, while administrative abuses, as the Chingleput scandal, received prominent mention. Commenting on 'a family resemblance' amongst the addresses, The Madras Mail observed that the Indian leaders were 'taking a leaf out of the Anglo-Indian book by organising in view to defence and self-support.'[2] Equally significant, the Ripon demonstrations also revealed the capacity of local associations in South India to embark on joint political ventures in areas where they shared a common interest. Almost 100 mofussil politicians, undaunted by 'pecuniary expense' or 'personal labour', visited the metropolis to participate in the celebrations,[3] and their presence was utilized by the city politicians to canvass support for the proposed Mahajana Sabha.

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1. Northbrook Collection, Eur.MSS.C.144, No. 6, Grant Duff to Northbrook, 10 March 1884.

2. The Madras Mail, 19 February 1884.

3. The Hindu, 15 February 1884.

III

In March 1884, almost six weeks after Ripon's visit to Madras, the sponsors of the Mahajana Sabha had derived enough confidence to issue a prospectus, formally announcing their decision to establish a central body, and defining its objectives, composition and relationship with the existing local associations in the Presidency. Emphasis was laid on its non-official character, although it was expected to represent 'all interests in and out of Madras.' Its primary aim was to 'watch public interests and take such steps to promote them from time to time.' While seeking the co-operation of the local associations, the founders of the Mahajana Sabha disavowed any intention of supplanting them with a single organization with branches in the mofussil centres. All local bodies were urged to affiliate themselves with the central organization without fear of losing their individual identity or completely merging their interests to subserve those of the Mahajana Sabha.[1]

The Madras Mahajana Sabha, as the proposed organization came to be ultimately called, was formally inaugurated at a meeting held in the metropolis on 16 May 1884. Dominating its proceedings were the leaders of the anti-Carmichael faction, among whom were Ananda Charlu, Rungiah Naidu, Balaji Row, Subramania Iyer, and Viraraghava Chariar. Balaji Row, while moving the resolution calling for the formation of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, explained that his inquiries in recent months had assured him that there was wide support for the organization. In seconding the motion,

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1. The Madras Standard, 17 March 1884.

Rungiah Naidu contended that the Madras Mahajana Sabha, unlike the Madras Native Association, would only have non-official members who would 'represent fearlessly the wishes of the people.'[1]

The immediate and long-term objectives of the new body were outlined at some length by its founders. Balaji Row saw a dual function for the Madras Mahajana Sabha. Firstly, it was 'to bring before our rulers the views of the public and to correctly represent to Government what our needs are and to suggest remedies.' Secondly, it was to devise means 'to improve the condition of the people.'[2] Ananda Charlu, on the other hand, believed that the rationale of the Madras Mahajana Sabha lay in the need 'to bring to a focus nearly all the non-official intelligence, now spreading without any visible proofs of cohesion, all over the Presidency.' At the same time, he visualized a national role for the new organization. While helping in 'developing into a national feeling what has been, till quite recently, an essentially local feeling', he also wanted the Madras Mahajana Sabha to direct the embryonic 'national intelligence' into fruitful channels. 'Fail to direct it aright', Ananda Charlu warned, 'it will overflow its bounds - it would flood where it should fertilise.'[3]

One of the earliest tasks that faced the founders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was to draft a body of rules to regulate its working. The constitution that was adopted in 1884, containing in all 17 clauses, set

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1. The Madras Mail, 20 May 1884.

2. Ibid., 20 May 1884.

3. Proceedings of the (First) Conference of Native Gentlemen, held at Pacheappa's Hall under the auspices of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in January 1885, (Madras, 1885), pp iii-v.

out in specific terms the objectives of the organization and ways of attaining them, the composition and fees of membership, the strength and functions of the office-bearers, and the mode of enlisting the co-operation of the existing associations in the Presidency. Membership was to be restricted to those above 21 years of age, and those accepted were to pay an annual subscription of not less than one rupee. The executive control of the body was to be vested in the hands of a Committee, elected annually, while each affiliated body had the right of nominating one member to sit in an ex-officio capacity in the Committee. Provision was also made for the quarterly meetings of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, to be attended by all members, to review its work for the past three months.[1] These rules, except for certain minor modifications, remained in force until 1896.

The nucleus of the early leadership of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was largely drawn from the anti-Carmichael faction.[2] Rungiah Naidu, whose emergence on the political scene could be traced to his participation in the anti-Carmichael movement, was named President of the new organization, a position that he filled for almost two decades until his death in 1902. Amongst those elected Vice-President of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was Balaji Row, a strong opponent of Carmichael, and who, as Provisional Secretary, had worked tirelessly to enlist support of the various local associations in the Presidency. The position of Joint Secretaries was filled by Ananda Charlu and Viraraghava Chariar, both of whom had opposed the Carmichael reception, and who for many years remained in the inner

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1. Ibid., pp 1-2.

2. No complete list of office-holders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha is available for the years 1884-5 and 1885-6. The analysis that follows is based on those elected to hold office for 1886-7.

circle of Madras politics. Two members of the Committee were G. Subramania Iyer and Salem Ramasamy Mudaliar, both critics of Carmichael, and known for the unostentatious way in which they discharged their functions in the Madras Mahajana Sabha.

However, the pro-Carmichael faction did not go unrepresented in the Madras Mahajana Sabha. Amongst those elected to the Committee was C.V. Sundram Sastri,[1] an active participant in the Carmichael celebrations. Similarly, G. Mahadeva Chetty, a wealthy merchant in the metropolis and a supporter of Carmichael, was also chosen to serve in the Committee. Also featuring prominently in the inner circle of the Madras Mahajana Sabha were certain leaders who had not become involved in the Carmichael affair. Included in this category was P. Somasundram Chetty,[2] one of the eight Vice-Presidents of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in 1886-7. Another filling a similar position was S. Subramania Iyer,[3] who was living in Madura while the Carmichael affair was being heatedly debated in the metropolis. The

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1. C.V. Sundram Sastri (1848?-1897), son of Runganada Sastri, was a leading vakil in Madras. Having entered public life during the late 'seventies, he featured prominently in the revival of the Madras Native Association in 1881. The Hindu, 10 June 1897.

2. P. Somasundram Chetty (1824-1898), 'the conservative veteran' of Madras politics, entered business after a brief career in the public service. His political life began during the 1850's when he was a prominent member of the Madras Native Association, and between 1889-95 was President of the Madras Standing Congress Committee. The Madras Mail, 10 May 1898.

3. S. Subramania Iyer (1842-1924) was perhaps the outstanding product of Madura during the nineteenth century. Abandoning a low-paid official post to qualify as a vakil in 1868, he soon built up a lucrative practice in Madura. In 1882, he had helped found the Madura People's Association, but migrated to the metropolis two years later when he was appointed to the Madras Legislative Council. S.M. Raja Ram Rao, Sir Subramania Aiyer. A Biographical Sketch, (Trichinopoly, 1914), pp 4-16.

presence of these leaders, all well-known for their moderation on political questions, provided some form of counterpoise in the Committee to the radical tendencies of the anti-Carmichael faction.

The framers of the constitution of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, while admitting only non-official members, appear to have wavered between the idea of restricted and free membership. When the prospectus was issued in March 1884, a system of restricted membership seemed to have found some favour. Indeed, the organizers went so far as to indicate their preference for the proficient of the Madras High School, the graduate of a university, the pleader of a district court, and the dubash of the agency house. The right of entry to others was not entirely closed, but their admission depended upon sponsorship by two or more members of the body. Subscription fees were to be 'not less than 3 Rs a year for every member, as also for every proxy of an affiliated union.'[1] However, when the constitution was finally adopted in May 1884, the rigour of the original rules was generally relaxed. Annual subscriptions were reduced to a minimum of one rupee, while membership was thrown open to 'any Native of more than 21', provided he be recommended by two members.[2]

There is no doubt that by retaining the principle of recommendation in admitting members the Madras Mahajana Sabha had secured a built-in guarantee to prevent any indiscriminate stampeding of its portals by unwanted elements. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this provision was employed to exclude deliberately any interest or group from the association, while it is difficult to estimate what influence it had

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1. The Madras Standard, 19 March 1884.

2. Proceedings of the /First/ Conference of Native Gentlemen, p 1.

on the strength of its membership. In June 1885, just over a year after its formation, the Madras Mahajana Sabha had 205 members on its rolls. During the ensuing year, there was a significant growth in its membership, and by May 1886 a total of 796 Indians had become members.[1] To a large extent, the fresh accessions were from the mofussil, which now came to account for over three-fourths of the members of the Madras Mahajana Sabha.[2] Henceforth, there was little basic change in the strength of the body, partly because mofussil politicians preferred to join the local associations that were affiliated to the Madras Mahajana Sabha rather than the central body itself.[3]

The absence of relevant data regarding the background of the members of the Madras Mahajana Sabha renders it impossible to assess accurately the interests that it attracted or the strength of the different caste, communal and occupational groups within its ranks. However, an analysis of its leadership, vested in a Committee of 36, throws some light on these questions and gives an indication of its general composition. Of the 36 members elected in 1886-7 to serve in the Committee, no fewer than 20 had gone through the portals of higher education and obtained a proficiency certificate in the Madras High School or a degree from a university. Of

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1. There is some disparity in the membership figures published in The Madras Mahajana Sabha. Annual Report for 1885-86 (Madras, 1886). While the complete list of members published at the end of the report (pp 64-84) puts the total at 796, the figure given in the report of the Joint Secretaries (p 1) is 770.

2. Of the 796 members whose names are mentioned in The Madras Mahajana Sabha. Annual Report for 1885-86 (pp 64-84), no less than 602 were mofussil residents.

3. The Hindu, 20 August 1888.

these graduates, 15 had become vakils in the High Court, 2 journalists, 1 merchant, 1 zemindar and 1 medical practitioner. As for the 16 non-graduates in the Committee, 13 were merchants, while the other 3 included a zemindar, a retired district munsif, and a journalist. Analysed in communal terms, the Committee included 20 non-Brahman Hindus, 13 Brahmans, 2 Indian Christians and 1 Muslim.[1]

When a similar analysis is made of the composition of the 'Corresponding Members' of the Madras Mahajana Sabha - through whom the central association maintained liaison with its affiliated bodies in the mofussil - the above pattern seems to be largely repeated. Of the 42 Corresponding Members in 1886-7, 18 had taken a university degree (of whom 13 became vakils) and 11 had passed the pleadership examinations and started practising in the district courts. Not unnaturally, the dominant occupational group among the Corresponding Members was the legal element which alone accounted for 24 of the 42 members. Of the remaining 18, 4 were teachers, 2 merchants, 2 journalists, 1 zemindar while the vocations of 9 are unknown. Broken into communal groups, 22 of the Corresponding Members were non-Brahman Hindus, 19 Brahmans and 1 Indian Christian.[2]

A glance at these figures reveals the unmistakeable preponderance of the western-educated elite in the leadership of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. Out of a total of 78 Committee and Corresponding Members, no less than 49 were graduates or qualified pleaders. Especially significant was the fact that exactly half of the leadership was drawn from the legal profession. The strength of the other occupational groups, by comparison, pales into

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1. The Indian Mirror, 20 October 1886.

2. The Madras Mahajana Sabha. Annual Report for 1885-86.

relative insignificance. While the mercantile interests appear to be represented somewhat in proportion to their economic and numerical strength, neither the peasantry nor the landed aristocracy attained a degree of representation to commensurate with their numbers or wealth. Disparities were also apparent in the communal groups that shared the burden of leadership of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. While the Muslims were under-represented,[1] the Brahmans were palpably over-represented for a community that formed only 3.6 percent of the total population. The origins of these disparities should be largely traced to western education which at this time was almost synonymous with the political awakening in South India.

To refer solely to the membership criteria to assess the character and influence of the Madras Mahajana Sabha would be to ignore, if not distort, the principles that guided its organizers. The founders of the body were far-sighted enough to eschew any ideas of imposing an uniform and highly cohesive organization throughout the Presidency. Indeed, by opting for the principle of affiliation, they not only avoided many of the difficulties inherent in launching fresh branch bodies but also steered clear of the danger of enkindling an element of friction with the existing associations in South India. The affiliation scheme, while allowing local associations to co-operate with the Madras Mahajana Sabha on issues of common political interest, permitted them to pursue their own immediate and

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1. Under-representation was also apparent at the membership level. Of the 796 members on the rolls of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in 1886, only 12 were Muslims. The Madras Mahajana Sabha. Annual Report for 1885-86, pp 64-84.

local objectives. While anxious to affiliate every local body in South India,[1] the leaders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha amply recognized the wisdom of caution if resistance to the idea was not to be prematurely engendered. By May 1886, a total of 57 associations, of which 54 were strung out in the mofussil centres, had accepted affiliation status.[2] Two years later, 82 associations had tied their political fortunes to the Madras Mahajana Sabha.[3]

IV

A significant innovation in the evolution of agitational techniques in South India was the decision of the Madras Mahajana Sabha to convene 'a Conference of Gentlemen representing various parts of the Presidency' in December 1884 in order to bring about 'a periodical exchange of thoughts between Madras and the Mofussil.'[4] Unlike former political bodies in South India, whose activities were restricted to public meetings, deputations, lectures and memorials, the Madras Mahajana Sabha took a new leaf out of the book of constitutional politics by convening periodic conferences, attended by selected delegates from various parts of the Presidency, to formulate its political programme and decide on the mode of executing it.

To some extent, the very character of the Madras Mahajana Sabha demanded this new departure. Being an organization embracing a large number of disparate local associations, it was no easy task to frame a viable and readily acceptable political programme. The constitution of

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1. The Hindu, 24 September 1885.
2. The Madras Mahajana Sabha. Annual Report for 1885-86, p i.
3. The Hindu, 20 August 1888.
4. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 22 December 1884.

the Madras Mahajana Sabha had vested the immediate responsibility for policy formation with the Committee, which had some built-in provisions to guide it in its efforts to ascertain the feelings of affiliated associations before committing them to any line of policy or action. The appointment of Corresponding Members offered one channel of contact between the Committee and the scattered local bodies, while the right of every affiliated association to nominate a member to sit in the Committee furnished another means of contact and consultation. If the former provided a tenuous link, the latter was rarely invoked. Indeed, neither of these provisions afforded scope for a regular and systematic exchange of views between the central caucus and the affiliated bodies.

It was partly an appreciation of these shortcomings that persuaded the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha to convene a conference in December 1884. Speaking on this occasion, Ananda Charlu explained that the realization of the objectives of the organization necessitated 'a free and frequent interchange of thought' between its affiliated bodies. He felt that such meetings permitted the leaders to participate in 'the process of stock-taking and self-appraisement', and at the same time 'enlighten the public with their knowledge and the result of their labours.' Moreover, he believed that such conferences were 'a crying emergency' to prevent 'a widespread misunderstanding' between the rulers and the ruled and between 'the races making up the latter.' If this 'mere alienation of feeling' was allowed to take roots, Ananda Charlu feared that it might develop into 'positive antipathy' and have serious repercussions in the country.[1]

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1. Proceedings of the /First/ Conference of Native Gentlemen, pp iii-v.

In September 1884, the President of the Madras Mahajana Sabha formally notified the affiliated associations of the decision to hold a Conference at the metropolis in late December. There was optimism about the response to this invitation, especially since the Madras Fair was scheduled to take place about the same time.[1] Moreover, the Christmas season witnessed the annual Convention of the Theosophical Society in Madras City, and this event was attracting a growing number of Indians from various parts of South India, some of whom were also prominent members of the affiliated bodies of the Madras Mahajana Sabha.

The Conference, delayed slightly by the interruption of the rail services, started on 29 December 1884, attended by over 70 delegates,[2] the great majority representing the mofussil bodies. Especially well represented were the Tamil districts, notably Salem, Kumbaconam, Coimbatore, Madura, Negapatam, Tinnevelly and Chingleput. Equally significant was the response of the more remote Telugu districts. Such centres of political activity as Cuddapah, Bellary, Gooty, Rajahmundry and Anantapur had deputed delegates to participate in the Conference. A fact of some interest was the presence of three delegates from Bangalore, although affairs concerning the Indian States remained outside the scope of the Conference. However, conspicuous by their absence were the west coast districts of Malabar and South Kanara, while the extreme northern districts of Vizagapatam and Canjam also went unrepresented in the Conference.

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1. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 22 December 1884.

2. A complete list of the delegates who attended the Conference is not available, while estimates given in the Proceedings of the /First/ Conference of Native Gentlemen (pp I-III & VII) range from 70 to 100.

Although scheduled for three days, the Conference went into the fourth day, finally dissolving on 2 January 1885. After a brief speech of welcome by Rungiah Naidu, who presided over the entire session, and an exposition on the objectives of the Madras Mahajana Sabha by Ananda Charlu, the Conference focused its attention on the subjects outlined in the agenda. Papers were read on the reform of the Indian legislature,[1] separation of the revenue and magisterial functions, the condition of the agricultural population in South India, and the structure of Indian Government and changes desired.[2] The Conference adopted two resolutions of immediate significance. Firstly, it was resolved that the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha should draft a memorial for submission to the government on the reform of Indian legislatures after adoption at the next Conference. The second resolution contended that 'the union of the revenue and magisterial functions in one and the same officer is productive of much evil and hardship, and that early measures should be adopted for their separation.' The Conference spelt out the substance of a memorial that the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was to prepare for endorsement at the next Conference.[3]

As the first Conference of its kind in South India, it had its shortcomings as well as its significance. The main criticism that could be

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1. For a discussion of this issue, see Chapter V.

2. Also read at the Conference was a paper on the Ceylon Legislative Council. This, as well as the other papers, are published in extenso in Proceedings of the /First/ Conference of Native Gentlemen.

3. Proceedings of the /First/ Conference of Native Gentlemen, pp vii-ix.

levelled against its proceedings was the undue emphasis that was given to lengthy papers on broad and general themes rather than formulating definite resolutions on narrow and well-defined issues. A cause for some disappointment to certain delegates was the failure of the Conference to adopt any resolutions on some pressing provincial and local issues. Peter Paul Pillay, a delegate from Srivilliputtur, had wanted the Conference to memorialize the government demanding remedial measures to arrest the growing poverty of the ryots. In his survey of the condition of the agricultural class in Tinnevelly, Peter Paul Pillay had drawn the attention of the delegates to the impoverishment of the 'middle or intermediate class of ryots' as a result of high assessment, rigid collection of the dues, the harsh forest and salt laws, and the rising litigation charges. The Conference deferred action on this issue, as also on the suggestion to appoint a committee to examine whether the recommendations of the Famine Commission had been faithfully implemented.[1]

The significance of the Conference, however, far over-shadowed whatever shortcomings that were apparent in its proceedings. On the one hand, the Conference, by discussing those subjects on which there was general unanimity, helped to focus public attention on issues which were rapidly becoming questions of national importance. Issues like the reform of the Indian legislatures and the separation of revenue from magisterial functions had more than a provincial appeal, and by giving them prominence the Conference emphasized the possible fields of inter-provincial co-operation. Secondly, the Conference brought together for the first time

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1. Proceedings of the /First/ Conference of Native Gentlemen, pp 50-74.

men from widely dispersed areas and of varying backgrounds on a common political platform, and thereby provided the opportunity to exchange ideas and become mutually acquainted with each others' problems and aspirations. Lastly, the Conference stimulated the growth of constitutional agitation by encouraging political leaders to debate their problems on open platforms, cultivate the habits of reaching compromise and consensus, and propagate their decisions to the less articulated sections of their people.

A surprizing feature of the Conference was the entire omission of the civil service question from its agenda. Ever since 1876, when the age of entry into the Covenanted Civil Service was reduced from 21 to 19, this issue had hung fire, precipitated an All-India agitation under the aegis of the Indian Association, and had culminated in a deputation to the Secretary of State in March 1884. Kimberley's bland refusal to restore the old age-limit gave rise to a renewed outburst of agitation in India, and in Madras The Hindu led the onslaught on the India Office by giving almost uninterrupted prominence to the issue for almost four months.[1] The Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, convinced that the reduction of the age-limit had 'practically shut out the natives of India from the Covenanted Civil Service', decided to memorialize the Secretary of State in October 1884, expressing its 'deep regret and disappointment' over his reply to the deputation and urging him to raise the age-limit to 23.[2]

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1. At the height of this agitation, The Hindu assumed an extreme posture, attributing Kimberley's attitude to the 'unjust and unfounded jealousy of the political advancement of the Natives, and a suspicion of their loyalty.' It warned the Indian authorities that disregard for their past pledges was causing 'silent discontent throughout the country.' Cited in The Voice of India, 31 July 1884.

2. The Madras Standard, 15 October 1884.

If the India Office hoped to neutralize the odium that it had incurred over the age-limit issue by creating the Statutory Civil Service, it must have been disappointed by the Indian reaction to the experiment. In Madras, the government's insistence on adopting a system of pure nomination in the selection of candidates, giving priority to considerations of 'birth, character, services of family', coupled with the inferior status accorded to the Statutory Civilians, rendered the experiment unpopular amongst merit-conscious Indians, who demonstrated their dissatisfaction in January 1884 by urging Ripon to replace nomination by a system of open competition. Ripon promised to revise the rules, but on his departure in December 1884 he had only succeeded in suspending the old rules, and in effect investing the provincial authorities with 'a wide discretion' in the selection of candidates.[1]

Ripon's promise, not unnaturally, left the fallacious impression in the public mind that the era of patronage in the choice of Statutory Civilians had come to an end. Hence, in January 1885, when the Madras Government made three nominations on the basis of 'limited competition', it gave birth to a fresh wave of agitation. The Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, in calling upon the Indian Government to veto the nominations, contended that the examinations were neither fully competitive nor the results adequately publicized. The basis of selection, the Committee asserted, was 'highly unpopular with the Native community', would discourage 'able and intelligent candidates' from competing, while 'mere favouritism and patronage' of the officials would 'ultimately decide the question

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1. Report of the Public Service Commission, 1886-87, p 26.

of selection.'[1] Similar sentiments were echoed by other public bodies in South India, including the Madras Graduates Association. The Government of India, while regretting that the Madras authorities had not fully explained their procedure of selecting candidates to the public, upheld the latter's right to devise whatever system they wished and accepted one of three nominees that they had recommended.[2]

The Indian Government's response (the substance of which was communicated to the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in May 1885) gave little cause for elation in South India. Determined to extort some concessions, the Committee decided to carry its agitation a stage further by appealing directly to the Secretary of State for India. In a memorial to the India Council in August 1885, the Committee spelt out in some detail its views as to how the rules governing entry into the Statutory Civil Service might be rendered more equitable and popular. The basic change that was advocated was to limit selections 'compulsorily in the first instance' to those who had attained 'eminence in Government service or in a learned profession'. Only if these two sources of supply been 'earnestly searched and exhausted' were the government to turn elsewhere. Where the latter was the case, the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha felt that the 'competitive examination should be accepted as the sole and final test' in the selection, thereby minimizing 'the chances of abuse of patronage and injustice to the public at large.'[3]

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1. IHP (Public), Vol. 2505, May 1885, Memorial of Madras Mahajana Sabha to Government of India, 3 February 1885.

2. Ibid., Government of India to Government of Madras, 5 May 1885.

3. The Madras Mahajana Sabha. Annual Report for 1885-86, pp 11-6.

However, when the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha met in September 1885 to draft the agenda for the second Conference to be held at 'the end of this year', the civil service issue was again omitted. Though the Conference was committed to discuss two subjects that had been deferred during the last Conference, viz. the reform of the Indian legislatures and the separation of revenue from judicial functions, the Committee made no secret of its intention to shift the focus of attention from national issues to subjects of provincial and more popular character. Three new themes were listed for the deliberations of the forthcoming Conference, namely the operation of forest and salt rules in South India, establishment of Arbitration Court 'on the lines of the one in Poona', and means of stimulating indigenous industries in the Presidency.[1]

This shift in the emphasis of the Conference was partly a reaction to the pressures of public opinion in Madras, which had been for some years demanding a relaxation of the harsh forest and salt laws. The agitation, which began in 1882 when the Grant Duff Administration tightened these laws, had shown few signs of abating over the years. Indeed, when the Bombay Forest Commission was constituted in 1885, the Madras press promptly demanded a similar inquiry in South India. The Madras Times, first to suggest the idea, urged the Madras Mahajana Sabha to undertake the task of collecting information and bringing to light 'authentic cases of hardship' resulting from the operation of the forest laws. The proposal was supported by The Hindu, which urged the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha to include the issue in the agenda of the forthcoming

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1. The Hindu, 15 October 1885.

Conference.[1] The Committee obliged, framed interrogatories on the forest and salt rules, and circulated them to its affiliated bodies. Delegates to the Conference were invited to reveal any known cases of hardship to the people, and expose the dishonest practices of salt and forest officials.[2]

The decision to discuss the forest and salt laws during the forthcoming Conference was generally welcomed by the affiliated associations. In many of the mofussil towns, the leaders of these bodies convened public meetings to explain the objects of the Conference and to discuss its proposed agenda. At the same time, steps were also initiated to gather data on the working of the forest and salt rules. In many instances, small teams were sent out into the taluks and villages to interview the ryots and ascertain the grievances of the people. In Coimbators, for example, a six man deputation made a village-to-village tour of the district to investigate the operation of the Forest Act. Much of the information that was gathered was forwarded to the Madras Mahajana Sabha, while petitions and other written complaints also flowed in from independent sources.[3]

The second Conference, held under the auspices of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, assembled in Madras City on 23, 24 and 25 December 1885. The mofussil was strongly represented, with no less than 21 centres sending a total of 44 delegates to participate in the proceedings. Especially

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1. Ibid., 1 September 1885.

2. Ibid., 15 October 1885.

3. Proceedings of the Second Conference of Native Gentlemen held at Pacheappa's Hall under the auspices of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in December 1885, (Madras, 1886), pp 6-8 & 90.

encouraging to the organizers was the relatively strong deputations that came from the remote centres of Gooty and Anantapur, while Tanjore district retained its reputation as the politically most advanced district in the mofussil by sending the largest number of delegates. Although Ganjum was represented in this Conference, no delegate had come from Vizagapatam, Malabar and South Kanara.[1] A novel feature of the Conference was the presence of ryots. Both Coimbatore and Vellore had included a number of ryots in their deputations to give weight to the testimony that they had gathered about the harsh forest and salt laws.[2]

The opening day of the Conference, after the introductory speeches from the President and Secretary of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, was entirely devoted to the discussion of the two draft memorials that had been prepared on the reform of the Indian legislatures and the separation of revenue from magisterial functions. There was some unhappiness amongst the delegates over the government's failure to act on the latter issue, having admitted the iniquities of the existing system, because of financial considerations. In deciding to petition the Indian Government, the Conference was determined to evolve a feasible scheme of reform which would demonstrate that the financial problem was 'not such an insurmountable difficulty as is generally supposed.' A 'rough sketch' was outlined separating revenue from magisterial work in the Madras Presidency, involving an estimated additional outlay of Rs 50,000 per year. To offset this burden, the Conference suggested certain administrative adjustments to set free the necessary funds, viz. amalgamation of Registration and Revenue

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1. Ibid., pp 1-3.

2. The Voice of India, January 1886.

departments, abolition of the post of Inspector-General of Registration, and dissolving the District Court of Kurnool as recommended by the Judicial Re-organization Committee.[1] G. Subramania Iyer, while introducing the memorial at the Conference, asserted that the proposed reform would end 'a relic of barbarous times' and relieve the Collector from his 'multifarious duties' and enable him to 'acquaint himself with the feelings and wishes of the people.'[2]

The second and third day of the Conference were almost exclusively dominated by the controversial forest and salt questions. The decision to elicit information of these issues saw the Conference being flooded with petitions and complaints, mostly in the vernaculars. The Ryots' Association of Madanapalle in their submission, complained that the Forest Act had deprived them of their manure and grazing lands. The mirasidars of Coimbatore, on the other hand, advocated the formation of the Arbitration Court to settle impartially all cases arising out of operation of the forest and salt laws. At the same time, ryots present at the Conference testified the hardships that these laws were causing. The delegates, for their part, were equally critical. Peter Paul Pillay, speaking from his 'personal experience', accused forest officials of conniving with speculators 'at the wanton and unfair denudation of trees for their illegal income.' He contended that forests in zemindary areas, without these irksome laws, were 'better controlled and managed.'[3] S.P. Narasimhulu Naidu, who had conducted a special inquiry into the working of

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1. The Madras Standard, 25 December 1885.
2. The Madras Mail, 24 December 1885.
3. The Madras Mail, 26 December 1885.

the Forest Act in Coimbatore, asserted that the Forest Department in Madras was 'a costly establishment, and the gain to Government nil.' He catalogued the several hardships that this Act caused to the villagers, and concluded his speech with an impassioned appeal that the redress of these grievances was more important to the people of his district than 'the introduction of a greater number of coaches, Chairs, railways, watches and other luxuries.'[1] Similarly spirited speeches, though not with the same degree of feeling and intensity, were made against the salt laws. The Conference ended by formally endorsing the demand for Commission of Inquiry into the working of the forest and salt laws in the Madras Presidency.[2]

As the curtain fell on the second Conference, a significant era in the political evolution of South India also drew to a close. This phase, ushered in with the launching of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in May 1884, was characterized by the increasing unification of articulate opinion in South India. In the realm of organization, the formation of the Madras Mahajana Sabha had brought on the scene a cohesive body with a defined constitution to regulate its activities. From the beginning, this organization had concentrated much of its energies on affiliating the various local associations that were emerging throughout the Presidency, a process that was necessarily slow, demanding patience and persuasion. To some extent, the emergence of the Madras Mahajana Sabha as 'a mouthpiece of South India in the fullest sense of the term' depended on its ability to formulate a viable programme which would appeal to the disparate interests that it sought to attract. The Conferences that its Committee organized in 1884

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1. Proceedings of the Second Conference of Native Gentlemen, pp 27 & 101.
2. The Madras Mail, 26 December 1885.

and 1885 went some way towards evolving an acceptable platform, although pressures of public opinion compelled a shift in the emphasis from national to provincial issues. By delving into the working of the forest and salt laws, the Madras Mahajana Sabha also showed its determination to become the vehicle of articulate opinion in South India. A measure of its success lay in its ability to become the focal point of organized opinion in Madras. Independent agitation by the local associations became less and less apparent during these years as the Madras Mahajana Sabha, by utilizing the Conferences as a sounding board of informed opinion, emerged the unchallenged spokesman of the entire Presidency.

In launching the Madras Mahajana Sabha and by convening the Conferences, Madras also took a decisive step in its march towards the stage of national politics. Indeed, the ideal of a national movement had partly dictated the work of the Madras leaders who were anxious to develop 'into a national feeling what has been, till quite recently, an essentially local feeling.'[1] The Conferences, by discussing issues which were more than of provincial interest, helped to foster this feeling and emphasize the fact that Madras shared certain common aspirations with the other parts of the sub-continent which could be realized by mobilizing inter-provincial unity. Hence, when the Indian National Congress began its annual sessions in December 1885, there was no lack of support from the Madras leaders, who accepted it in the endeavour to discover All-India co-operation.

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1. Proceedings of the /First/ Conference of Native Gentlemen, p vi.

Chapter IV

Madras and the Emergence of the Congress

Among those who had cause to regret the emergence of the Indian National Congress was Colonel H.S. Olcott, President of the Theosophical Society. In his customary annual oration at the Theosophical Convention in December 1888, Olcott regretted that many branches of the organization were not represented, while the number of Theosophists attending had dropped sharply. He attributed this relapse to the Congress which, he claimed, had 'drawn all Indian thought into the vortex of politics.' Only a few years ago, Olcott had found that Theosophy had roused 'an intense interest in the ancient religions and philosophies', became a'household and dear word in every Hindu home', while its founders were 'met with benedictions and fervent expression and joy.' He feared that this level of enthusiasm could not be long sustained and, indeed, had anticipated a 'reaction' from Theosophy. By 1888, the reaction had fully set in. 'The wreaths once woven for us', lamented Olcott, 'are now being hung around the necks of the political leaders who are thought to be laying the bases of the future Indian Empire, greater than Akbar's or Chandragupta's, enduring as adamant.'[1]

If the Theosophists were repenting the coming of the Congress, politicians in Madras were extolling its virtues especially in stimulating political activity in South India. M. Viraraghava Chariar, Joint Secretary of the Madras Standing Congress Committee, was emphatic in his estimation

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1. 'General report of the XIII Convention and Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, December 1888', The Theosophist, X, 1888-89, pp 12-3.

of the impact of the Congress when he said in 1890:[1]

> Had it not been for the Congress, Madras would have been nowhere. It had been greatly helping the people in Madras. Before that time Madras was called benighted. Now we have, throughout the Presidency, Standing Congress Committees to help the Central Committee at Madras.

Students of history will hardly accept in entirety Viraraghava Chariar's evaluation of the impact of the Congress in Madras. He ignores, for example, the work of the Madras Mahajana Sabha which laid the firm foundations on which the Congress movement came to be erected in South India. Nor does he take into reckoning the advancing tide of nationalist sentiment that was gradually engulfing South India during the second half of the nineteenth century. As The Hindu rightly emphasized, the Congress was 'the embodiment of the growing consciousness of Nationality' in India, and it was the 'prospect of a new and enlarged Indian Nationality' that provided 'the chief incentive and sustaining force of the whole movement.'[2] Hence, to understand the rapid emergence of the Congress in South India, it is essential to trace the growth of the sentiment of national consciousness in Madras.

I

Political leaders in Madras, swept by this strong current of nationalist sentiment in the country during the 'eighties, attributed 'the phenomenom' to the conjunction of two factors. Firstly, as G. Subramania Iyer asserted in 1888, the roots of this movement lay in 'the substratum

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1. Report of the Sixth Indian National Congress held at Calcutta, on the 26th, 27th, 29th, and 30th December, 1890, (London, 1891), p 66.

2. Cited in The Voice of India, June 1888.

of unity subsisting among the nationalities of India.'[1] Despite the 'heterogenous elements' that went to make up the country, it was contended that 'from the earliest times there has existed a vague conception of a distinct Indian nation.' In this sense, the germs of Indian nationalism antedated British rule. 'Amidst the very varieties of language, religion, manners and institutions,' observed The Hindu in 1887, 'there lay underneath a common basis which distinguished the people of India from those of other countries.' Secondly, there was the impact of the British Raj, that 'Providential' intervention which arrested the cycle of civil war and anarchy in India, established stability and political unity over a subcontinent remarkable for its linguistic, religious, cultural and social diversity. The British Raj, in the words of The Hindu, was

> doing more than any other that preceded it did, to develope the latent feeling of nationality existing among the people. The very fact (sic) that the different races of India, the Sikhs, the Bengalees, the Mahrattas and the Dravidians, being ruled by the same Government and imbibing the spirit of the same civilization, must act as a unifying force. English education has opened the eyes of the people and taught them to feel that they are a common nation, bound together by common interests. The Post, the Telegraph and the Railways have done a vast deal to give an active effect to this nascent feeling.[2]

In effect, British rule had dispelled the view that India was 'a mere geographical expression.' It had given the Indian people an identity 'distinct from the subjects of other States,' sharing certain common institutions and laws and held together by 'common interests and common privileges.'[3] Indeed, as G. Subramania Iyer observed in 1885, the benefits of

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1. The Hindu, 20 June 1888.
2. The Hindu, 18 April 1887.
3. The Hindu, 30 April & 9 May 1888.

the British Raj could be summarized

> in one remarkable fact, namely, that for the first time in the history of the Indian populations there is to be beheld the phenomenom of national unity among them, of a sense of national existence, and of a common solicitude for the well-being and honour of their common country.[1]

The feeling of All-India unity was vaguely manifested as early as 1845 when Madras and Bengal made a determined attempt to frustrate the enacting of the Lex Loci Draft Act. In Madras, the proposed legislation had roused deep feelings and led to the submission of protest petition to the Indian Government in April 1845. Bengal too lost little time to demonstrate its dislike of the measure and the Dharma Sabha, having rallied the orthodox and liberal Hindus to the cause, presented a memorial to the Indian authorities protesting against the Draft Bill.[2] When the amended Bill, called Caste Disabilities Removal Act, was finally passed in April 1850, the events of 1845 were re-enacted. Both Madras and Bengal, reacting to what they construed as a palpable invasion of their religious liberties, again memorialized the Indian Government. Although their protests failed to halt the measure, the issue nevertheless helped to emphasize the common interests that the Hindus of Madras shared with their brethren in Bengal.

It is known that at the height of the Lex Loci agitation an effort was made by the leaders of Madras to enlist the co-operation of Bengal.[3] Although the attempt failed, the contacts thus established proved important when the British Indian Association was organized in 1851. It was this

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1. Proceedings of the First Indian National Congress. Held at Bombay, on the 28th, 29th and 30th December, 1885, (Bombay, ?), p 19.

2. The Spectator, 30 April 1845.

3. The Athenaeum, 11 April 1854.

body that first envisaged the vague idea of attaining All-India unity, with a single nerve centre at Calcutta and branches in the various provinces of British India. Prompted by the desire to lay India's grievances before the Charter inquiry, the leaders of Bengal recognized that their grievances would carry 'great weight if they were made simultaneously by the natives of every part of British India, or by a Society having just pretensions to represent them.' In formulating a scheme for an All-India organization, the Bengali leaders advocated the formation of 'Corresponding Committees' at the various provincial centres to communicate readily and freely with the parent body in drafting petitions and deciding the tactics of agitation.[1] Although the idea proved abortive, with Madras breaking away, and Bombay and Poona forming their own associations in 1852, these bodies continued to maintain some liaison with each other, especially during the period of the Charter agitation. The task of organizing an All-India organization was clearly premature during the 1850's, but the success of the leading Indian centres in forming their own associations, prompted by the common impulse of seeking redress to their grievances, symbolized a distinct political advance and was a foretaste of what was to happen in the ensuing decades.

The failure to launch an All-India organization did not hamper the growth of closer inter-provincial links on issues of common political interest. How far the three Presidencies were capable of reacting together was demonstrated in 1860 when Bengal, Bombay and Madras unleashed a concerted agitation against the fresh taxes that had been proposed by the Indian

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1. The Spectator, 1 March 1852.

Government. Similarly, when Governor Trevelyan resigned in the same year after making public his opposition to the taxation policy, the leaders of the three Presidencies voted separate addresses regretting his departure from India. 'Demonstrations on behalf of opinions in one Presidency,' rightly observed the Indian Mirror in 1862, 'call forth like manifestations on the part of those holding the same opinions in others.'[1] The Indian press, for its part, did all it could to encourage 'the growth of national sentiments' during these years. Newspapers like the Indian Mirror made it their editorial policy 'to make the people of other Presidencies acquainted with the people of Bengal, held up their several interests as joint and reciprocal, and predicted one fate and one future as destined for both.'[2]

Politics were not the only sphere in which the sentiment of national unity came to be manifested. During the 1860's, a bold attempt was made to inaugurate inter-provincial co-operation in the field of social reform. It was the Brahma Samaj, imitating the precedent of the British Indian Association, that first endeavoured to carry the torch of social reform beyond its Bengal frontiers. The point of departure came in February 1864 when Keshub Chandra Sen, secretary of the Brahma Samaj, set forth on a two month lecture tour to South and West India. Determined to achieve a 'national reformation' by mobilizing the energies of 'Young India' in the various provincial centres, Sen's powerful and eloquent oratory touched a receptive chord throughout the country. In Madras, his appeal helped to

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1. The Indian Mirror, 1 April 1862.

2. Ibid., 1 August 1863.

launch the Veda Samaj within a month of his departure.[1] Bombay similarly responded, and the Prarthana Samaj-regarded as 'a sister church' of the Brahma Samaj- was organized in 1867.[2] Also by this time, similar inroads were being made into the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab owing to the exertions of Sen and his 'itinerant missionaries,'[3] and an expanding network of Brahma Samaj branches were beginning to link the major centres of British India.

But Keshub Chandra Sen was more than a mere social reformer engaged in overthrowing idolatry, uprooting caste and changing marriage customs. A gifted speaker, endowed with a perceptive mind, his oratory carried an unmistakeable political message. He was an ardent believer in the cause of India's regeneration, and looked hopefully towards the western-educated elite, or the 'Young India' as he called it, to 'emancipate' the country from the position into which she had 'sunk down'. In his speeches, he focused public gaze on the 'degenerate' state of India, exhorted the need for political associations, and extolled the virtues of Indian unity.

> Make a small beginning. Let there be a dozen men in Bombay, a dozen in Madras, and a dozen in the Punjab, and we shall form the nucleus of a general confederation - one caste for all the educated natives of India, - and then we shall take in all other classes of the native communities, and unite in a vast and mighty confederation.[4]

This theme was recurrent in the many speeches that Sen delivered during his

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1. Sen's visit to Madras and the consequent formation of the Veda Samaj are discussed in Chapter VI.

2. N.S. Bose, The Indian Awakening and Bengal, (Calcutta, 1960), p 108.

3. P.S. Basu, Life and Works of Brahmanda Keshar, Second Edition, (Calcutta, 1940), pp 119-22.

4. S.D. Collet (Ed.), The Brahmo Samaj Lectures and Tracts. By Keshub Chunder Sen, (London, 1870), p 217 & 226-7.

frequent lecture tours to the different parts of India. He travelled almost tirelessly and ceaselessly since 1864, sometimes spending as much as four months in the year away from Bengal. Though his appeal failed to enlist any substantial support for his cause, partly due to his emphasis on social reform, Keshub Chandra Sen had nevertheless blazed a trail which his successors were not slow to imitate and exploit.[1]

The sentiment of national consciousness in India, which had been roused by the efforts of Keshub Chandra Sen, continued to be fostered by the regular stream of Bengali reformers spanning the country during the 'seventies and early 'eighties. Madras received its due quota of Bengali missionaries whose activities, besides advancing the cause of social reform, also helped to emphasize the underlying unity and the growing integration of India. In 1870, for example, three Brahma Samajists visited Mangalore to ordain a congregation there. In 1877, when the famine was ravaging South India, the Bengali Samajists launched an appeal for subscriptions and co-ordinated their efforts with their brethren in Madras to reach the stricken and the starving.[2] Since 1878, when the Bengali Samajists split into two factions,[3] Madras became a battleground of the rival camps, each determined to win the allegiance of Madras. While the truncated Brahma Samaj sent Pratap Chandra Mazumdar and Amrita Lal Bose to wage its campaign in Madras, its rival, the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, was represented by Pandit

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1. S.N. Banerjea's tours during the late 'seventies and early 'eighties spring readily to mind, and they bear more than a superficial resemblance to those undertaken by Keshub Chandra Sen.

2. P.S. Basu, op.cit., pp 174 & 346.

3. For the background of the events leading to the split, see Charles H. Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, (Princeton, 1964), pp 91-7.

Sivanath Sastri and Bipin Chandra Pal.

Among the Bengali Samajists who made the greatest political impact in Madras at this time was Bipin Chandra Pal. While en route to Bangalore in September 1881 to take up a teaching post, Pal gave a stirring speech on 'National Improvement' before a large Madras audience. In the main, his was a powerful plea for national unity to redeem a people 'groaning under foreign misrule.' Though India in the past had been regarded as 'a geographical entity', Pal was confident that it was steadily moving towards becoming 'one homogeneous nation.'

> It is an Utopian idea. It is a chimers, but from history I have learnt that India, notwithstanding our 100 religions and 200 languages, will prosper and flourish. The histories of Germany, Italy and Switzerland tell us that we should not despair, and there shall be a day when the Madrassee shall embrace the Bengalee and walk hand in hand with each other.

But Pal did not under-estimate the problems of erecting the 'huge edifice' of Indian nationhood. He believed, however, that when every Indian 'gives his brick' the edifice could be built.[1]

Bipin Chandra Pal, however, was hardly voicing the beliefs of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj as reflecting the mainstream of radical Bengali thinking which was then finding expression through the Indian Association. Organized in 1876 for the avowed purpose of unifying 'the Indian races and peoples upon the basis of common political interests and aspirations,' the Indian Association gave a strong and sustained stimulus to the cause of nationalism. Utilizing every opportunity to stir up political activity inside and outside Bengal, the Indian Association seized upon some of the unpopular measures of Lytton's Viceroyalty to mount an All-India agitation.

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1. The Madras Times, 5 & 6 September 1881.

The reduction of the age of entry into the civil service in 1876 provided the body the first significant moment 'to organise a national movement.' Views of its branches were ascertained, a memorial was drafted for submission to Parliament, and S.N. Banerjea was deputed as 'special delegate' to enlist support of the other Indian centres, including Madras. This procedure was repeated, with minor variations in detail, when the Vernacular Press Act was passed in 1878 and the cotton duties partially abolished in 1879.[1] In these issues, the Indian Association had demonstrated in unmistakeable terms that there were areas of 'common political interests and aspirations' in which All-India co-operation was feasible. This axiom of political thinking received further and, indeed, its most effective proof when the Indian Association convened the National Conference in December 1883. Although the representation of the non-Bengali provinces was disappointing, the National Conference was a landmark in the growth of Indian nationalism in so far as it made the first real attempt to bring to a common platform delegates from the different parts of the country.[2] That the hopes of its sponsors to make it an annual event - so that it might evolve ultimately into 'the future Parliament of India'[3] - were not realized was no indication of its impracticability, for its discontinuation after 1885 could only be attributed to the emergence of the Indian National Congress.

As India entered the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the tide

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1. For an account of the agitation against these measures, see J.C. Bagal, op.cit., pp 17-41.

2. For the proceedings of the National Conference, see The Bengalee, 29 December 1883 & 2 January 1884.

3. The Bengalee, 5 January 1884.

of nationalist sentiment was flowing strongly over much of the sub-continent. In Madras, this feeling found expression in the growing demand for some form of All-India co-operation, partly to give strength and coherence to the country's grievances and partly to develop and canalize the forces of Indian nationalism. One line of thinking was the formation of an All-India organization. P. Ananda Charlu, speaking at the cotton duty meeting in June 1879, was among those who wanted 'an Indian Association, with branches to represent matters in the interests of India.'[1] He expressed regret that because of 'the want of intercommunication between the different Presidencies, or rather between the different towns where men of intelligence ought to be found, movements are made in one part without any consultation whatever with parties in the other.'[2]

Ananda Charlu was not alone in calling for some kind of a national organization in India. M. Sivasamy Sastri, a graduate of Madras University, evolved a scheme in May 1880 for the establishment of a 'National Congress' or 'Hindu Mahajana Sabha.' In effect, however, his scheme only envisaged a Hindu organization as he believed that its success depended on having a common religious base. The sympathy of the religious heads was to be enlisted in order to rally the support of the conservative elements of Hindu society. At the same time, editors of Indian newspapers were to be enrolled as members and encouraged to use their organs to propagate the objectives of the organization. Moreover, where subscriptions were received for the 'National Fund', these editors were to be made 'provisional custodians' of the funds. The headquarters of the national body were to

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1. The Indian Mirror, 12 June 1879.

2. The Madras Mail, 3 June 1879.

be located at Benares - the 'most sacred place' of the Hindus - while branches were to be started at village, district and provincial levels to work systematically towards the goal of 'representative government' in India.[1]

The necessity for some kind of All-India endeavour was also recognized by the Indian press. In Madras, as F.H. O'Donnell testifies from his personal knowledge, the editor of The Hindu devoted much of his energies 'particularly to winning a number of local Indian societies' to sink their 'local jealousies in the work of union.'[2] Indeed, The Hindu by its persistent espousal of the nationalist cause and by giving coherent expression to the views of the western-educated Indians became accepted as 'an All-India paper, even though it could not claim any large All-India circulation.'[3] As early as May 1881, The Hindu emphasized that India's political regeneration depended on the people's capacity 'to combine for national purpose.' While commending the work of the various political organizations in the country, it was unconvinced that these bodies, 'acting at random and at great distance from one another', could effectively advance the country's interests.[4] In January 1883, when F.H. O'Donnell's scheme for an 'Indian Constitutional Reform Association' was published, The Hindu spelt out the advantages of unified agitation:

> Time has come when the people of India should assert their rights with all the strength of a national movement. At present much of

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1. The Madras Times, 5 May 1880.
2. F.H. O'Donnell, A History of the Irish Parliamentary Party, II, (London, 1910), pp 438-9.
3. The Hindu, 7 October 1928.
4. Ibid., 19 May 1881.

> our energies are scattered and wasted by want of organised action. What an individual association or a local population represent to Government as a grievance of the country is generally treated as the outcome of some intriguing and ambitious mind and consequently the representation though possibly based on existing facts is little heeded by Government. Therefore, these various local energies should command an organised and central outlet which will command the attentive hearing of the authorities as being the expression of genuine public feeling.

To The Hindu, a feasible way of attaining the objective was through periodic national conferences held at important Indian centres. Some time ago it had learnt that the Indian Association was 'maturing a scheme for an annual national congress to be held in some central city such as Delhi, to which native gentlemen from different parts of the country were to be invited.' If a meeting of individuals was regarded impractical, the paper felt that the various associations in the country should depute delegates to meet at a central place to 'devise a scheme of perpetual constitutional agitation and thereby provide a means of bringing the united Indian opinion to the Government or Parliament.'[1]

If there were any misgivings about the necessity of All-India co-operation, they were dispelled when the Anglo-Indian Defence Association waged a protracted and effective campaign against the Ilbert Bill. A new sense of urgency was felt by those calling for national unity and in July 1883 The Hindu issued a further exhortation:[2]

> The time for half-measures, and half-hearted action is gone; that for united and sustaining efforts has arrived. The two hundred and fifty millions living in this vast continent should no longer regard themselves as inhabitants of different provinces bound together by no common interest or common grievances. They

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1. The Hindu, 18 January 1883.

2. Ibid., 12 July 1883.

> have become the nation of a great and flourishing empire; their interests have been unified; and they must henceforth stand or fall together.

One line of immediate action was to start a newspaper in London to represent India's 'side of the story before the English public.' Rejecting any suggestion that the idea was 'visionary', The Hindu urged the formation of provincial committees to obtain contributions and subscribers. When the Indian Association launched the National Fund at this time, The Hindu suggested that the collections ought to be partially used to finance an Indian newspaper in London. The Calcutta body was urged to enlist the co-operation of the other organizations in the country in order to determine the objects to which the National Fund ought to be applied. However, it was the idea of 'an annual conference of representatives from various parts of the country' that still enjoyed the highest priority of The Hindu, and it did not hesitate to recount the advantages of such a gathering:[1]

> These annual conferences will have the invaluable effect of harmonising local feelings, diffusing public spirit, and creating and consolidating native public opinion. Backward provinces will be stimulated into activity and those that are advanced will lend the benefit of their experience and knowledge.

Indeed, the convening of the Indian National Congress in December 1885 represented the realization of this aim.

II

The story of the Indian National Congress has been too often told to merit any elaborate reconstruction of the events in this survey. Much of the credit for organizing the Congress is given to A.O. Hume, generally known as 'the father of the Indian National Congress.' Believing that India was becoming 'saturated with discontent' owing to the failures of Ripon's

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1. The Hindu, 2 August 1883.

predecessors, Hume became fearful of a 'catastrophe.'[1] Had this situation continued, Hume explained that the 'growing feeling of discontent' would have 'constituted a dangerous inflammable atmosphere in which any accidental spark might have developed an inextinguishable conflagration.' However, Ripon's rule had 'changed everything for the better.'[2] Ripon, according to Hume, had succeeded in converting 'as though with the wand of a magician, universal sullen discontent into widespread and enthusiastic loyalty'[3] and 'restored the people's waning belief in British honesty of purpose and good faith.' Among Ripon's many beneficial measures, the Local Self-Government scheme of 1882 was hailed as the most important. To Hume, the scheme provided a valuable 'safety valve', while Sir William Wedderburn, Hume's official ally in Bombay, believed that if faithfully implemented it would create 'the best kind of Native agency for the worst' and 'revive the functions of the ancient village communities.'[4]

However far-reaching and radical Ripon's reforms were, Hume felt that they were in themselves inadequate to offer a permanent solution to India's political problems. In his view, what was equally essential was a national organization to provide 'an overt and constitutional channel of discharge' to the ferment that 'western ideas, education, inventions and appliances' had produced in the sub-continent.[5] To realize his project, Hume was

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1. Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43616, Hume to Ripon, 30 December 1882.
2. The Hindu, 19 April 1883.
3. Ibid., 5 July 1883.
4. The Indian Mirror, 21 July 1883.
5. Audi Alteram Partem: Being two letters on certain aspects of the Indian National Congress Movement, (London, ?), pp 28-9.

hoping to employ the talents of the western-educated elite - 'the soul of the nation' - and thereby 'keep the pulses' of the Indian masses 'at an equal flow'. The impact of Ripon's measures, he felt, had 'rendered the whole country once more wholly amenable to the intellectual guides.' [1] Hence, in March 1883, Hume addressed an appeal to the graduates of Calcutta University, calling upon them to organize an association 'to promote the mental, moral, social and political regeneration of the people of India.' This appeal was not in vain, and it resulted in the formation of the Indian National Union. Gradually, this body extended its influence throughout the entire country, including Madras, and its nucleus were a dozen groups, called either the 'Select Committees' or 'head centres', located at the various provincial capitals and they became, in Hume's phrase, 'the inner circle of the National Party.' [2] By September 1885, the Indian National Union had within its ranks 'the great majority of the foremost members of the native community of all parts of India.' [3] Hume was the provisional secretary, and he was the key link in the long chain that connected the various 'head centres' in the country.

Much of the activities of 'the inner circle of the National Party' is shrouded in mystery, largely because Hume took pains to draw the heavy veil of secrecy over its proceedings. Indeed, it is the Ilbert Bill episode that gives the first glimpse of the workings of the 'head centres'[4]

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1. The Hindu, 19 April 1883.

2. W. Wedderburn, Allan Octavian Hume, C.B. "Father of the Indian National Congress" 1829 to 1912, (London, 1913), pp 50-4.

3. The Hindu, 24 September 1885.

4. It must be pointed out, however, that the movement calling for the extension of Ripon's Viceroyalty also owed its origin to Hume's 'head centres'. Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43616, Hume to Ripon, 7 May 1883.

and provides some indication on the influence that it exercised over nationalist thinking in the country. Although Hume and his friends had refrained from any persistent agitation in support of the Ilbert Bill, they had nevertheless made their position clear on the question of compromise or abandonment of the measure. In April 1883, when European agitation had made the issue 'a test case', Hume publicly opposed its withdrawal as it would mean 'formal abrogation of India's Magna Charta, the Queen's Proclamation.' Moreover, he believed that Indians would be 'bitterly disheartened and disappointed', and feared that the 'old bitter, though secret, dissatisfaction with our unsympathetic Government will revive in redoubled intensity.'[1] In December 1883, when Ripon suggested a compromise to Hume, the latter renewed his opposition to any concession to European agitation.[2] Hence, when the Concordat was announced, Indian opinion regarded it as 'a surrender, and a disgraceful one.'[3] The Hindoo Patriot, for example, called the Concordat 'a surrender' to European agitation,[4] while the Reis and Rayyet termed it as 'a deed without a parallel.'[5] Indian leaders were equally critical of the settlement. In Madras, the Concordat was received with 'great alarm in the native public' and a hasty telegram was sent to the Viceroy seeking clarification.[6] In Bombay, the Concordat took 'everyone by surprise' and it was 'generally

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1. The Indian Mirror, 10 June 1883.
2. Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43616, Hume to Ripon, 19 December 1883.
3. W.S. Blunt, op.cit., p 65.
4. Cited in The Madras Standard, 31 December 1883.
5. Cited in The Hindu, 9 January 1884.
6. The Hindu, 28 December 1883.

considered a very great mistake.' In some circles, there was pressure for a public meeting 'to protest against this so-called compromise.'[1] An Indian agitation, attacking the Concordat and severely critical of Ripon's handling of the issue, seemed imminent.

To 'the inner circle of the National Party', there were certain grave dangers implicit in any course of action on the Indian side that led to criticisms of Ripon or his policies. The dilemma, as one prominent Bombay leader saw it, was that while Indians must criticize 'openly and strongly' the Concordat they must do so without embarrassing a government that had 'done too much good to the country.' In Bombay, some demanded a public meeting to express their feelings, but others were 'doubtful about the expediency of this' and preferred to make known their views 'in respectfully but emphatically worded memorials.'[2] The latter course eventually prevailed in Bombay and the proposed memorial, while criticizing the Concordat, would accept in good faith the decision of the Ripon Administration as 'the most judicious one under the circumstances.'[3] Bengal, caught in a similar dilemma, was not prepared to attack the Concordat lest it precipitate Ripon's resignation.[4] This strengthened the Bombay line, and Bengal, Poona and Madras were urged to accept this course of action. Reactions were generally favourable, and by the first week of January 1884 there were hopes in Bombay that their decision would assume

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1. Ilbert Collection, Eur. MSS. D. 594, No. 18, Telang to Ilbert, 24 December 1883.

2. Ilbert Collection, Eur. MSS. D. 594, No. 18, Telang to Ilbert, 24 December 1883.

3. Ibid., 25 December 1883.

4. H. Mody, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. A Political Biography, Reprint, (Bombay, 1963), p 77.

'the shape of a national expression of confidence in Ld. Ripon's Government.'[1] Although Bombay's advice against public meetings were not obeyed in Calcutta and Lahore, nevertheless the various 'head centres' were unanimous in expressing their confidence in Ripon as well as their gratitude for his 'emphatic vindication of the Queen's Proclamation.' The prompt and decisive intervention of the 'inner circle', while ensuring that a popular Viceroy would not be 'driven out of office by the very people whose cause he had espoused',[2] also demonstrated its capacity to shape the trend of nationalist thinking in the country.

Another known instance in which 'the inner circle' successfully determined the course of nationalist action was the civil service issue. In April 1884, following Kimberley's refusal to raise the age of entry, Hume sent a confidential letter to the Bombay leaders[3] suggesting a way 'to induce Lord Kimberley to reconsider the matter.' Accepting Ripon's suggestion, Hume urged the various Indian associations 'to strengthen the Viceroy's hands by numerous and influential memorials couched in moderate language and addressed to the Secretary of State.' The suggestion was accepted, and Bombay issued a circular to the various 'head centres' calling them for 'united action' on an issue of 'the utmost importance.'[4] In

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1. Ilbert Collection, Eur. MSS. D. 594, No. 18, Telang to Ilbert, 3 January 1884.

2. H. Mody, op.cit., p 77.

3. The letter, published by Anglo-Indian newspapers, failed to identify the writer. Hume admitted authorship to Ripon's private secretary, remarking 'There having been some treachery somewhere.' Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43616, Hume to Primrose, May ? 1884.

4. The Madras Mail, 15 May 1884.

Bombay itself, the prevailing view was that 'the general voice should make itself heard on the subject',[1] and the proposed 'demonstration' was held in August 1884. In Bengal, the Indian Association published its memorial in May 1884. In the same month, Poona, Lahore and Allahabad agreed to petition the Secretary of State, while the Madras Mahajana Sabha belatedly published its memorial on the subject in October 1884.

However, it was the occasion of Lord Ripon's departure from India that provided Hume's 'head centres' with an unrivalled opportunity to demonstrate all their latent capacity for organization. In September 1884, the Simla correspondent of The Indian Mirror, presumably Hume, called for 'a grand farewell demonstration to Lord Ripon for his large-hearted, liberal, and statesmanlike policy, which he has tried to inaugurate in this country.'[2] The proposal was welcomed by the nationalist press throughout the country. The Mahratta, calling for 'something like a national demonstration', suggested ways of enlisting the support of villages in the country.[3] The Indian Mirror called for 'a demonstration' which would not only show India's gratitude for Ripon but would have 'a marked effect both in this country and in England.'[4] The 'inner circle of the National Party' was not slow to respond. Bombay was again in the forefront, and within a fortnight of the suggestion being made, its leaders had taken the preliminary steps to organize a 'grand' farewell reception.[5] Before the end of

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1. Ilbert Collection, Eur. MSS. D. 594, No. 18, Telang to Ilbert, 26 June 1884.

2. The Indian Mirror, 17 September 1884.

3. Cited in The Voice of India, October 1884.

4. Cited in The Hindu, 15 October 1884.

5. Ibid., 8 October 1884.

October, plans were also afoot in Madras to consider ways of participating in the movement. Simultaneously, a publicity campaign was started by the nationalist press to stir up popular enthusiasm for the coming demonstrations. In Madras, the brunt of this campaign was borne by The Hindu, with some support from the People's Friend. Throughout November and early December, meetings were held throughout the country to vote valedictory addresses to the Viceroy and finalize arrangements for their presentation. Ripon's final journey from Simla to Bombay, stretching over five weeks and linking the main centres of Northern India, proved to be 'a triumphal march, such as India has never witnessed - a long procession in which seventy millions of people sang hosannas to their friend.'[1] Bombay was to climax the entire demonstration. Among the countless deputations that gathered in this western metropolis in mid-December to bid a massive farewell were twelve deputations from the various districts of the Madras Presidency.[2] The 'inner circle of the National Party' had contrived to utilize Ripon's popularity to mobilize an All-India demonstration that had neither precedent nor parallel.

Observers of the Ripon demonstrations were in broad agreement in their estimate of its political significance. Sir Auckland Colvin, the Finance Member, claimed in an article attributed to him that the demonstrations were the'outward signs of the commencement of an era pregnant with the gravest consequences to the future of our rule in India.' Indian society, he asserted, was entering 'into the possibility of a corporate life and continuous self-improvement and progress.' The dry bones in the open valley',

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1. Sir Henry Cotton, India & Home Memories, (London 1911), p 185.

2. The Hindu, 22 December 1884.

he bemused, 'very dry as they may have seemed to the eye, were about to be instinct with life.'[1] Another prominent English official, Sir Henry Cotton, regarded the event as 'the natal day of a New India' when the entire country was 'stirred by one common impulse of gratitude.' 'No sign', observed Cotton, 'could have shown more clearly that the germ of a nationality had already sprung into life.'[2] Almost similar sentiments were voiced by W.A. Porter, for many years Principal of Kumbaconam College, when he said in January 1885:[3]

> In the last days of Lord Ripon's Viceroyalty you found out that native opinion had surprising unanimity and volume. All over India men were moved by the same feeling and spoke the same language. Opinion had organised itself.

To 'the inner circle of the National Party', the Ripon demonstrations represented not only a triumph for its organizational skill but also a vindication of its very existence. The reasons that prompted the demonstrations, as The Hindu observed, were not merely the feeling of gratitude to the departing Viceroy but also the desire 'to prove to the world the existence of a powerful native opinion which is capable of organisation and which has acquired a consciousness of its importance and strength.' The Ripon demonstrations, The Hindu asserted, were 'a distinctly political movement', intended to show 'the change that has come over the political feeling and knowledge of the people, and its growing intensity and width.' The immediate question, however, was to sustain and develop this 'first

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1. The Hindu, 22 December 1884.
2. H. Cotton, op.cit., p 185.
3. The Madras Standard, 23 January 1885.

beginnings of national life' and lead India 'to fresh victories.'[1] In short, the 'engine which set the late Ripon demonstrations going must not be stopped.'[2]

The debate of the next few months, conducted by the nationalist press and politicians throughout the country, was the question of devising ways and means of fruitfully deploying the rapidly emerging forces of Indian nationalism. The Hindu, for example, favoured the idea of an All-India organization to give unequivocal expression to those issues upon which 'public opinion is undivided.' 'The simplest way of securing such expression', The Hindu explained, 'will be to affiliate the numerous local associations that are scattered all over the country with a common mother association, so to speak, consisting of persons representing different parts of the country.'[3] The Indian Mirror, while differing in certain essential details, also gave priority to the idea of an All-India organization.[4] But Ananda Charlu, speaking at the Conference of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in December 1884, appeared to prefer periodic conferences to give direction to the 'renovated national spirit' in the country. Like Madras, he wanted all Indian provinces to hold their own conferences and then 'step forward to fraternise with us.'[5]

Ananda Charlu's views, if what he recorded some years later is true, were largely a reflection of the thinking of 'the inner circle of the

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1. The Hindu, 26 December 1884.
2. Dufferin Collection, Reel 502, No. 377, Reay to Dufferin, 4 June 1885.
3. The Hindu, 26 December 1884.
4. The Indian Mirror, 13 January 1885.
5. Proceedings of the /First/ Conference of Native Gentlemen, p vi.

National Party' that had gathered in Bombay during the Ripon demonstrations. Writing in 1903, Ananda Charlu gave his impressions of what took place in Bombay:

> I was a member of the deputation from Madras; and among many interesting events, which took place on that occasion, was an evening party given us all, in a garden (I think) on the outskirts of the city by a rich merchant whose name, I am sorry, I cannot recollect. Many and stalwart were the men whom I there witnessed and mixed with. It was there and among these that for the first time, the idea found expression, in terms, that an annual gathering should be convened of all India, beginning with the next ensuing year, so far as delegates might be willing or be induced to come to a central city, to discuss questions in which the country, as a whole, may be said to be interested and on which a practically unanimous opinion would be arrived at and declared.

Though there was general agreement as to the desirability of holding 'an annual gathering', the meeting dispersed without deciding the venue or date. The initiative then passed to Poona, where M.G. Ranade and his co-adjustors, supported by Hume, matured a scheme to hold the Congress there in December 1885.[1] Ananda Charlu's account is largely corroborated by the other Madras leaders who participated in the Ripon demonstrations. In March 1888, after Raghunatha Row had claimed that the Congress had been mooted at Madras after the Convention of the Theosophical Society in December 1884,[2] The Hindu asserted that the Congress emerged from the consulations during the Ripon demonstrations. The editor claimed that at Bombay the Madras

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1. P. Ananda Charlu, 'The Indian National Congress: A suggestive retrospect', The Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar, VII, No 1 & 2, July-August 1903, pp 1-7.

2. The claim of Raghunatha Row, subsequently echoed by the Theosophits, was not entirely without foundation. The Hindu admitted that after the Theosophical Convention of 1884 a Committee was set up to consider the question of a national convention, but the editor believed that this Committee never met subsequently.

deputation 'had a talk with their Bombay friends about a meeting of reformers from different Provinces.' Hume, who participated in the discussions, 'worked it up.'[1] M. Viraraghava Chariar, while recording his recollections in September 1903, confirmed that the Congress was mooted at the Ripon demonstrations.[2]

> For the first time perhaps in the annals of Hindustan an aristocracy of intellect from far and near had congregated in the town and island of Bombay, and the opportunity was taken to discuss the grievances and the requirements of the Indian population. The idea of holding annual gathering to discuss the various problems of Indian administration was then suggested.

If the Ripon demonstrations had helped in the decision of holding an annual gathering, there were still many difficult and complex problems to be solved before the idea could be reduced to practice. The task of resolving these problems fell largely on the shoulders of Hume, who spent the next twelve months in delicate and patient consultations with the various 'head centres' in the country and in ascertaining the reactions of the Indian Government and influential leaders in England. Bombay, the most active of the 'head centres' and whose leaders were Hume's closest allies, served as the starting point in the 'Hume crusade' which was to climax with the convening of the Congress in December 1885. As soon as the Ripon demonstrations were over, Hume started discussions with the Bombay leaders to start an Indian telegraphic service to despatch news to the English press giving India's 'point of view' and counteracting the influence of certain anti-Indian organs. Canvassed as early as March 1883,[3] the

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1. The Hindu, 16 March 1888.
2. Ibid., 21 September 1903.
3. The Indian Mirror, 17 March 1883.

idea was given formal shape on 19 January 1885 with the launching of the Indian National Telegraphic Union in Bombay.[1] Local committees were to be formed throughout the country to collect funds and keep the Bombay Committee informed about local events. In Madras, the venture was welcomed as 'the first step in the direction of bringing about a tangible union between the different Presidencies and Provinces of India.'[2]

The next step in the 'Hume crusade' was the formation of the Bombay Presidency Association on 31 January 1885. With the Bombay Association 'practically gone out of existence' and the Bombay Branch of the East India Association 'unable to adequately voice the popular sentiment', Hume and his Bombay allies decided that a new organization was needed to watch, regulate and develop 'national aspirations.'[3] Of special significance was the role of that 'brilliant triumvirate', namely K.T. Telang, B. Tyabji and P. Mehta. For some years, this 'legal trio' had dominated Bombay politics, and their ability to act collectively was not without its political significance to the country:[4]

> It was remarkable by reason of a unique phenomenom of three men of exceptional brilliance, all possessed of eloquence, representing the three great communities of India-Hindu, Mahomedan and Parsi, standing united on the public platform, working for the benefit of the country, without bias of race, creed or religion and trusted by their respective communities. It was an example for the whole of India.

Moreover, in launching this new organization, Bombay enhanced its reputation throughout the country as 'the chief centre of political thought in India.'

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1. The Hindu, 23 January 1885.
2. The Hindu, 4 February 1885.
3. H. Mody, op.cit., p 93.
4. Husain B. Tyabji, Badruddin Tyabji a biography, (Bombay, 1952), p 142.

The Hindu applauded 'the sobriety and practical nature of the opinions' of the Bombay leaders,[1] and urged them to take the initiative in organizing 'a Central Association consisting of members representing different parts of India.'[2]

Satisfied with arrangements at Bombay, Hume set out in February 1885 on his tour to the other 'head centres' in the country. After a brief visit to Madras, he reached Calcutta in March where, avoiding the leaders of the Indian Association, he wooed the 'moderate and loyalist elements' to his cause.[3] By May, having completed his mission, Hume returned to his Simla home. In a note to the press, he explained his tour rather modestly: 'I merely went from place to place to renew, or, in some cases, make the personal acquaintance of native gentlemen with whom, directly or indirectly, I had been long in communication.'[4] Assured of adequate support for his scheme, Hume saw Dufferin in May to inform the Viceroy of the decision 'to assemble a Political Convention of delegates', presided over by Lord Reay, Governor of Bombay. Dufferin, while accepting the need for such an assembly, vetoed the idea of Reay's participation.[5] By June, other details regarding the coming Congress were also settled. One principle that was agreed upon was that only issues 'shared unanimously by the entire country' would be debated on the Congress platform. Prominent among the

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1. The Hindu, 11 February 1885.

2. Ibid., 4 February 1885.

3. B.L. Grover, 'The Genesis of the Indian National Congress', Journal of Indian History, XLI, Pt. III, December 1963, p 608.

4. The Hindu, 26 June 1885.

5. Dufferin Collection, Reel 528, No. 173, Dufferin to Reay, 17 May 1885.

issues was the reform of the India Council, which was to be 'purged or entirely transformed', as it was believed to contain 'either the author or the sworn defender of every abuse against which the country desires to protest.'[1]

In August 1885, having completed his plans in India for holding the Congress, Hume sailed for England to consult his friends and obtain assurances of support. On arrival, he worked with his characteristic dedication and energy to contact and interview almost every important English leader sympathetic to the cause. One observer wrote: 'He has gone everywhere and seen everybody; and has obtained encouragement and promises of assistance from all whom he has seen.'[2] The intervention of the General Election in November also brought the Indian question into the forefront of British politics. Accepting Digby's suggestion to utilize the occasion 'to excite the sympathy of the masses in England for the Indian people,'[3] the Bombay Presidency Association enlisted the support of five other organizations, including the Madras Mahakana Sabha, 'to publish and distribute a general address to electors of the United Kingdom on behalf of India.'[4] At the same time, three Indian delegates representing Bengal, Bombay and Madras were sent to England 'to interest and inform the British public on Indian matters' and to support the candidature of the 'friends of India.'[5]

On 5 December 1885, coinciding with Hume's arrival in Bombay from

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1. Ibid., Reel 502, No. 377, Reay to Dufferin, 4 June 1885.
2. The Hindu, 12 November 1885.
3. Ibid., 5 September 1885.
4. Ibid., 10 October 1885.
5. The Madras Standard, 27 January 1886.

England, The Hindu announced that 'a Congress of native gentlemen from different parts of India' would be held at Poona at the end of the month.[1] This must have come as a surprize and even caused some confusion as only a week previously the Indian Association had announced that the National Conference would be held at Calcutta about the same time.[2] Although Congress sources claimed that the decision 'to hold a meeting of Representatives from all parts of India at the then coming Christmas' was taken in March 1885,[3] many members of 'the inner circle of the National Party' appeared to have been unaware of this decision. The only public hint of the coming event came in October 1885 when The Indian Mirror alluded to the doubtful possibility of a Conference of the Indian National Union taking place before the year was out either in Poona or Jubbulpore.[4] As for the agenda of the Congress, it remained a mystery almost until the eve of the meeting when the news of the outbreak of cholera at Poona led to the venue being shifted to Bombay. Indeed, as The Hindu subsequently admitted, the first Congress was 'got up rather hastily.'[5]

III

The first two sessions of the Indian National Congress, held at Bombay and Calcutta in 1885 and 1886 respectively, effected little fundamental change in the structure of Madras politics. To a large extent, the advent of the Congress merely involved an extension in the sphere of the

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1. The Hindu, 5 December 1885.
2. Ibid., 28 November 1885.
3. Proceedings of the First Indian National Congress, p 4.
4. The Indian Mirror, 16 October 1885.
5. The Hindu, 14 January 1887.

activity of the Madras Mahajana Sabha and its affiliated bodies from the platform of provincial to national politics. Neither in organization nor in agitational techniques did the first two Congress sessions introduce any new element in Madras politics. The same was true of the personnel participating in the Congress deliberations. The composition of the Madras deputations to the Congress meetings in 1885 and 1886 was basically similar to that which participated in the Conferences convened by the Madras Mahajana Sabha in 1884 and 1885.

The inaugural meeting of the Indian National Congress was held under a veil of relative secrecy. Following the announcement of the event early in December, the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was able to fix the dates of its second Conference sufficiently early to allow the delegates to travel to Bombay. In response to the invitation from the Bombay Presidency Association, a general meeting of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was held on 12 December to elect delegates to the Congress.[1] Simultaneously, delegates were being also chosen in the various mofussil centres, presumably under the direction of the affiliated bodies of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, and they nominated 13 of the 21 delegates who represented the Madras Presidency at the first Congress.[2]

The significance of the Bombay Congress only dawned on the South Indian public after the conclusion of the event when the blaze of press publicity descended on it. While the nationalist press hailed the event as 'a memorable day in the annals of our national history,'[3] some Anglo-

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1. The Madras Mahajana Sabha. Annual Report for 1885-86, p 6.

2. For a complete list of the delegates, see Proceedings of the First Indian National Congress, pp 10-1.

3. The Hindu, 29 December 1885.

Indian organs criticized it as 'a hole-and-corner' affair. The controversy convinced the sponsors of the Congress that the principle of secrecy was hardly in consonance with a movement that aspired 'to focus public opinion in the country.'[1] Hence, soon after the dispersal of the delegates from Bombay, the formal resolutions of the meeting were circulated to the various political bodies for endorsement by the country at large. In South India, meetings were convened by the Madras Mahajana Sabha and its affiliated bodies to explain the aims of the Congress and seek approval of the programme that had been enunciated at Bombay. These meetings, to some extent, helped towards popularizing the Congress in Madras.

Another measure, designed to strengthen the cause of the Congress, was the launching of the National Fund in Madras. This project had been 'long in contemplation', at least since the Indian Association made a similar appeal in Bengal in 1883. Anxious to have a fund 'devoted for national purposes only', the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha took the initiative to convene a general meeting of its members in February 1886 to discuss the issue. The meeting resolved to establish a National Fund by appealing to 'the native public for donations and especially for contributions on occasions of festivity and rejoicing.' The objects of the fund were also spelt out,[2] and a circular was sent to all affiliated bodies seeking their co-operation. To make the venture 'widely-known and popular', the mofussil bodies were urged to start 'house-to-house

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1. The Madras Mahajana Sabha. Annual Report for 1885-86, p iv.

2. The Madras Mahajana Sabha. Annual Report for 1885-86, pp v-vii.

collection', while special appeals were to be made on days of festivity.[1] Contributions were remitted to the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, the provisional custodians of the fund, and in March 1887 the National Fund stood at Rs 1,843.[2]

Equally significant in popularizing the Congress in South India was the decision to institute a more regular system of electing delegates for the Calcutta gathering. It was agreed that the system that had obtained at the first Congress, when delegates came as 'volunteers in the good cause, uncommissioned, as a rule, by any constituencies, local or general', should be replaced by another which insisted that delegates 'ought to receive some public authorisation from the bodies and communities (or leading members of the latter) whom they were to represent.'[3] When these instructions were received in October 1886, the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha transmitted them to its affiliated bodies throughout the Presidency calling upon them to convene public meetings to explain the objects of the Congress and elect delegates. Elections got under way almost immediately, and by the last week of November the names of 36 mofussil delegates, representing 14 districts, were forwarded for submission to Calcutta.[4] In view of the relative novelty of the elective idea, the results were generally satisfactory at least in securing territorial representation. Unlike certain other provinces, Madras was not

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1. Proceedings of the Second Conference of Native Gentlemen, Appendix 2.
2. The Hindu, 16 March 1887.
3. Report of the Second Indian National Congress, held at Calcutta on the 27th, 28th, 29th and 30 December, 1886, (London, 1887), p 1.
4. Supplement to The Madras Times, 1 December 1886.

dominated by metropolitan representation and, indeed, of the 47 delegates that it sent to the Calcutta Congress, only 14 came from the metropolis.[1]

However, in one important respect, these elections were a failure: they failed to bring in any accessions into the mainstream of Madras politics. In effect, the great majority of the elected delegates represented the very elements that had actively participated in the Conferences of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. The conservative faction, as represented by Madava Row, Maharajah of Vizianagram, T. Rama Row and G.N. Gajapati Row, which had remained aloof of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, also steered clear of the Congress. More important, the Madras leaders failed to secure an adequate representation of the communal groups. With the notable exception of a single Muslim,[2] the Madras deputation to the Calcutta Congress was wholly Hindu. Although two Indian Christians had attended the first Congress, none participated in the second. The Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association of Southern India, under the leadership of D.S. White,[3] though known to sympathize with some of the aspirations of the Congress, went wholly unrepresented in the second Congress. If the elective system was intended to secure an equitable representation of the various factional and communal elements in South India, the elections of 1886 were a failure.

The Calcutta Congress, however, did provide some basis for widening the support of the nationalist movement in South India when it agreed to the setting up of Standing Congress Committees at all provinces in order

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1. Report of the Second Indian National Congress, Appendix I.

2. In the original list of elected delegates that the Madras Mahajana Sabha submitted to Calcutta, there were 5 Muslims, though for reasons unknown only I eventually attended.

3. He attended the Bombay Congress, not in the capacity of a delegate, but 'as Amici Curiae.'

'to keep up a regular correspondence between all the different parts of the country.'[1] In practice, this meant supplanting the informal, albeit rather secretive, 'head centres' that Hume had erected at the various provincial capitals by an open organization whose activities would come under some degree of public surveillance. Moreover, this decision invested Madras with a distinct organization to discharge Congress work rather than relying upon the Madras Mahajana Sabha. The Madras Presidency, together with the Indian States of Travancore, Cochin, Mysore and Hyderabad, were grouped into a single Congress 'circle' and placed under the immediate control of the Madras Standing Congress Committee. It was in the composition of this Committee that a significant attempt was made to secure the representation of the communal and factional groups in South India.[2]

Even more important from the point of view of broadening the base of the nationalist movement in South India was the decision to hold the third Congress in Madras City in December 1887. The successful staging of the first two sessions in Bombay and Calcutta imposed a great responsibility as well as a challenge to the leaders in Madras. On the one hand, Madras had to demonstrate that she was 'not behind any other part of India in discharging her part of public obligations.'[3] On the other hand, Madras wished to emulate and improve upon what had already been achieved in Bombay and Calcutta in transforming the Congress into 'a really

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1. Report of the Second Indian National Congress, p 111.

2. The strength of the Madras Standing Congress Committee varied from time to time. In 1890, for example, its strength was 42, of whom 34 were Hindus, 4 Europeans and Eurasians, 2 Muslims and 2 Indian Christians. See The Hindu, 25 January 1890.

3. The Hindu, 21 December 1887.

representative movement.[1] In this respect, the second Congress had its obvious shortcomings, especially with 'the old hereditary aristocracy' remaining aloof, the agricultural classes 'inadequately represented', and the mercantile element largely abstaining. Then, there was the problem of communal representation which, despite the efforts of the Bengali leaders, was disappointing in Calcutta, with the Muslims in Bengal virtually following the Aligarh precedent by declaring 'publicly against the Congress.'[2]

If there were hopes of enlisting the co-operation of the different communal and factional groups during the coming Congress, they were partly founded on the sober realism of recent events. A measure of goodwill among the various political leaders in Madras City had existed ever since Lord Ripon's visit in January 1884 when they had willingly participated in a massive demonstration of welcome. A similar display of unanimity was also evident in July 1884 when a large public meeting was held in the metropolis to protest against the official exodus to the hills. In December 1884, on the occasion of Ripon's departure from India, the different communal and factional groups in Madras had again demonstrated their ability to co-operate when prompted by the impulse of common interest. On two of these occasions, the initiative was taken by the Madras Mahajana Sabha and, as nothing had occurred in the ensuing years to destroy this fund of goodwill, its leaders were fairly hopeful of repeating their past successes during the forthcoming Congress.

If there were doubts, they concerned the response of the Muslims. Though Madras Muslims had yet to display any open hostility towards the

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1. Ibid., 2 September 1887.

2. Report of the Second Indian National Congress, pp 5-9.

Congress, it was apparent during the early months of 1887 that they did share many of the misgivings of their Aligarh and Calcutta brethren about the movement. They were painfully conscious of the deep communal divisions that kept them apart from the Hindus, creating periodic religious disputes between the two communities and, at times, serious rioting and bloodshed. The early 1880's had been a troubled period in Hindu-Muslim relations, with communal outbreaks in many centres of the Presidency, of which the worst incident was in Salem in 1882. Hence, the Congress demand for representative institutions raised apprehensions in the Muslim mind, especially as it threatened to throw the fortunes of the Muslim minority into the hands of the Hindu majority. Then, there was the question of Muslim backwardness in education, which in turn had affected their prospects of public employment. Here again, the Congress policies did not provide a solution to the Muslim malaise, but rather its demand for simultaneous examinations for entry into the Covenanted Civil Service tended to aggravate Muslim position. The idea of simultaneous examinations was almost universally opposed by the Muslim leaders in Madras[1] on the grounds that it would consolidate the position of certain groups monopolizing the public service. Madras Muslims, already apprehensive of Brahman domination of the Uncovenanted Civil Service, wished the Covenanted Civil Service to remain in 'the hands of neutral classes.'[2]

It was in April 1887, when the third Conference of the Madras Mahajana

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1. All Madras Muslims who testified before the Public Service Commission in January-February 1887 opposed the demand for simultaneous examinations.

2. Proceedings of the Public Service Commission, V, Sec II, Evidence of Mohidin Sheriff Khan and Safdar Hussein Sahib, pp 110 & 313-4.

Sabha met in Kumbaconam, that preliminary steps were taken towards formulating plans for the staging of the Congress in December. The Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, which had immediate responsibility for making all arrangements, took the opportunity of the Conference to meet the leaders of the mofussil bodies and 'the general plan of organization was talked over.' In these discussions, there was a general agreement that 'the only means of obtaining the requisite funds was by a wide and complete organization which would commit every district and every taluq to a vigorous co-operation with the Central Committee at Madras.'[1] Encouraged by this favourable response of the mofussil, the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha decided on 25 April to convene a public meeting to elect a Congress Reception Committee, composed of the leaders of the various communal and factional groups in the metropolis.[2]

The meeting, held on 1 May, elected a strong Reception Committee under the chairmanship of Madava Row. Enlisted to serve in the Committee were prominent leaders of the Muslim community. Both Humayun Jah Bahadur and Mahomed Abdullah Badsha, President and Vice-President respectively of the recently formed Central Mahomedan Association, agreed to serve, while the Anjuman-i-Mufid-i-Ahul-i-Islam was represented by its secretary, Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin. Representing the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association were B. Lovery and B.H. Chester, both close associates of D.S. White. The Indian Christians, though still lacking their own organization,[3] did not

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1. The Hindu, 21 December 1887.

2. The Madras Times, 21 August 1888.

3. This was, however, rectified in November 1887 when the Madras Native Christian Association was organized under the Presidency of N. Subramaniam. The Madras Standard, 30 April, 1888.

go unrepresented. Two of their leaders, Dr. S. Pulney Andy, a retired medical practitioner, and N. Subramaniam, a barrister of the Madras High Court, were drafted to serve on the Reception Committee. Equally significant was the willingness of the conservative politicians to participate in the coming Congress. Madava Row, Rama Row and Gajapati Row, who had studiously refrained from joining the Madras Mahajana Sabha or participate in its Conferences, now responded to the invitation to join the Reception Committee.[1] The cause of unity, which the nationalist leadership was so anxious to achieve, could hardly have had a more auspicious beginning.

The first major task which engaged the attention of the Reception Committee was the collection of funds to meet the expenses of the coming Congress. There was a general belief that the practice of the previous Congress sessions when appeals for aid were exclusively made to the aristocracy and the wealthy would not realize the estimated expenses of Rs 15,000. 'The people of Madras', observed The Hindu, 'can accomplish by their organization what Bombay and Calcutta were able to by their wealth.' The only option open to the Reception Committee was to mobilize 'the united force of the people', and appeal for contributions from every class and every part of South India.[2] In its circular to the mofussil bodies, the Reception Committee emphasized the importance of setting up district and taluq committees to collect and remit subscriptions to the Congress fund. As relatively little was known of the Congress among the non-English

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1. Report of the Third Indian National Congress held at Madras, on the 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th December, 1887, (London, 1888), p 10.

2. The Hindu, 19 August 1887.

educated in Madras, the mofussil leaders were urged to engage lecturers to disseminate information. 'With this view, from the headquarters of almost every district select men of intelligence, possessing persuasive power and tact of organization, were sent into the interior to explain the objects and scope of the Congress.'[1] For its own part, the Reception Committee endorsed the publication and distribution, in Tamil and Telugu, of the Catechism of the Indian National Congress. The pamphlet gave a brief account of the aims of the Congress, explained the grievances of the country, and pleaded for support of all classes and creeds. By November 1887, about 30,000 copies were distributed largely among the merchants and ryots.[2] The response to the appeal was generous, with no less than half the total subscriptions coming from petty contributors who had been reached by the Catechism. Contributions, in the shape of large donations, came from the ruling dynasties and the great zemindari families. The rulers of Mysore, Travancore and Cochin featured prominently in the list of subscribers; while large donations were also received from the Maharajah of Vizianagram, , Rajah of Ramnad, Rajah of Venkatagiri and Rajah of Bobbili.[3]

In October 1887, the Reception Committee issued directives to the Standing Congress Committees throughout the country 'to set afoot the necessary elections in their several jurisdictions.' Though the Congress leaders still subscribed to the belief that the elective system ought to 'develop in its own fashion for a year or two before laying down any fixed rules', the Reception Committee was nevertheless determined that 'every

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1. The Hindu, 21 December 1887.
2. Ibid., 16 November 1887.
3. Report of the Third Indian National Congress, pp 11-3.

portion' of the Madras Presidency and 'every class and creed' in it must be 'thoroughly represented' in the coming Congress meeting. Invitations to participate were sent to every political body in South India, including the affiliated associations of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. Election of delegates started in October and by December every district, with the sole exception of South Kanara, had nominated delegates to attend the Congress gathering.[1]

Interest however was mainly focused on the response of the various communal groups in Madras. Among the Muslims, there was a division of opinion on this issue, with one faction emerging strongly opposed to the idea of Muslim participation. The mouthpiece of the anti-Congress faction was the Muslim Herald, edited by Ahmad Mohidin Khan, and this organ gave vigorous expression to the Muslim doubts and apprehensions about the Congress. At the same time, it questioned the very assumptions on which the Congress was founded, derided its programme and ridiculed its sponsors. It believed that British India, with its 'mixed nationalities', did not constitute a nation. 'The term is applicable', argued the Muslim Herald, 'only to a body made up of a people descended from one stock, speaking a common tongue, amenable to a uniform law, and united under one Government.' The idea of 'a national alliance' between the various Indian communities, which the Congress aspired to bring about, was dismissed as 'next to impossible.'[2] Muslims were urged to stay aloof of the Congress so long as it adhered to a political programme, and avoided 'those concrete and practical questions', viz 'social reforms, commercial expansion,

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1. Report of Third Indian National Congress, pp 13-5 & Appendix I.

2. Cited in The Voice of India, December 1887 & January 1888.

encrouagement of arts and industries, [and] agricultural improvements.'[1] Certain Muslim organs, such as the Jarida-i-Rozgar, advocated abstention until Muslims had advanced educationally to be at par with the Hindus.[2]

Although the anti-Congress campaign had created doubts and uncertainty about the movement, it did not prove decisive in turning the Madras Muslims away from the Congress. To some extent, Muslim thinking on this issue had been influenced by the campaign that was waged by the pro-Congress groups. Among the Muslim leaders who took an active part in this campaign were Mahomed Abdullah Badsha,[3] Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin and Walji Lalji Sait, a wealthy and philanthropic merchant. Nor could the influence of such Muslims as Humayun Jah Bahadur be discounted. One of the most wealthy and influential leaders in South India, Humayun Jah Bahadur's decision to support the Congress appeared to have influenced some waverers. Moreover, factional rivalries among the Muslim leaders in the metropolis prevented any unanimity on the issue of Muslim participation in the Congress. While the Central Mahomedan Association was unable to reach a decision, the Anjuman-i-Mufid-i-Ahul-i-Islam nominated three delegates to take part in the proceedings. Indeed, of the 356 delegates who represented the Madras Presidency, no less than 58 were Muslims.[4] The anti-Congress Muslims, while standing aloof, also refrained from any open demonstration of their opposition to the Congress.

No less divided on this issue were the Madras Eurasians. Ever since

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1. Cited in The Indian Mirror, 28 October 1887.

2. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, Week-ending 15 December 1887, p 12.

3. The Hindu, 18 June 1891.

4. Report of the Third Indian National Congress, Appendix I.

D.S. White decided to support the Ilbert Bill, two factions had emerged within the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association, one supporting White's policy of making common cause with the Indians and the other wishing to tie their fortunes with those of the European community. Although the latter group repeatedly criticized White's 'pro-Native' policy, and even challenged his leadership at times, it was unable to influence policy so long as White kept a tight rein on leadership. When the invitation was received to participate in the Madras Congress, the old dissensions within the Eurasian body were revived, while the absence of White in Calcutta in connexion with the Public Service Commission inquiry encouraged indecision. Early in December, Hume requested a meeting to discuss the question with the Eurasian leaders and come to some decision.[1] With the help of W.S. Gantz,[2] Vice-President of the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association, Hume succeeded in persuading the members to recognize the advantages of participating in the Congress. At a meeting on 7 December, 5 Eurasian delegates were nominated to represent the association.[3]

It was not purely in terms of achieving a more complete degree of territorial and communal participation that the Madras Congress assumed an impressive aspect. Indeed, this event brought into the arena a number of political leaders who were to make a significant contribution to the Congress movement. Of these, it was the accession of John Adam and Eardley

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1. The Madras Mail, 6 December 1887.

2. W.S. Gantz (1846?-1898), started his legal career in Malabar before migrating to Madras City. A keen participant in public affairs, he served in the Madras Municipality for many years and succeeded White as President of the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association in 1889. The Hindu, 3 May 1898.

3. Report of the Third Indian National Congress, Appendix I.

Norton that created the greatest impact. John Adam, Principal of Pacheappah College, was a man of calm temperament and moderate views, and became the leading Madras exponent of technical and commercial education. He believed that every Englishman in India had 'a sacred duty to perform, viz., to maintain the English character, and to stand to his belief in justice and equality.'[1] Of a rather different temperament was Eardley Norton, son of John Bruce Norton and a barrister whose name is regarded as 'immortal in the history of the Madras Bar.' Born in 1852 into a family with long Indian connexions, he started his practice in 1879 and soon established himself as a lawyer of 'scintillating brilliance with an inimitable gift of repartee.'[2] On the Congress platform, he displayed his 'ready rhetoric and ready wit' with great effect. Combative and controversial, Norton emerged during the late 1880's as the principal Madras spokesman on Congress affairs.

IV

Barely had the Congress delegates dispersed from Madras, than a fierce controversy started over the issue of Muslim participation in the Congress. Opposition to the idea of Muslim participation was led by Syed Ahmad Khan who, in a series of vigorous speeches, denounced the Congress demands for representative institutions and simultaneous examinations and urged Muslims throughout the country to stand aloof of the movement. In Madras, this was the signal for the anti-Congress Muslims to step up their campaign against Muslim support for the movement. The Congress leadership,

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1. The Indian Mirror, 18 October 1887.

2. V.C. Copalaratnam, op.cit., pp 274 & 277.

determined to hold its ground, started a counter-assault on its opponents. Eardley Norton, very much in the thick of the Congress battles at this time, virtually led the campaign in Madras to enlist Muslim support for the Congress. In a combative speech in January 1888, he charged the editor of the Muslim Herald with propagating, wilfully and intentionally, 'a series of falsehood and misrepresentation' against the Congress. Nor did he spare Syed Ahmad Khan, whom he accused of 'doing his best to create a breach between the people maliciously and perniciously like Sir Lepel Griffin.' While defending the Congress programme, Norton expressed confidence in the Muslim ability to 'swim' in the proposed changes. He urged Muslims to 'put off their fantasies and rubbish notions and throw their lot in life not only with the Hindus but with Europeans for the purpose of achieving one common end.'[1] The argument for a postponement of Congress agitation till the Muslims had attained educational parity with the Hindus did not appeal to Norton:[2]

> Are the people to be in a state of collapse until the Mahomedans become M.A.'s and B.A.'s? Should the whole body politic, take a dose of political chloroform until the Mahomedans come to the front?

In March 1888, at a speech in Hyderabad, Norton made a reasoned plea for Muslim support of the Congress. He rejected as 'absolutely untrue' the claim that the Muslims were becoming estranged from the Congress movement. In a speech remarkable for its moderation, Norton attempted to assuage the fears that certain Congress demands might have roused among the Muslims. Discussing the demand for representative institutions, he explained that such a system of government would not necessarily submerge

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1. The Madras Standard, 27 January 1888.

2. The Madras Times, 23 January 1888.

the voice of minorities. Nor was Norton convinced that the Hindus would monopolize all the privileges that the Congress was demanding from the government. If there were any disadvantages weighing against the Muslims, he believed that they lay not in their numerical inferiority as in their educational backwardness. Norton felt that the cure lay within the grasp of the Muslims, and urged them to apply themselves rigorously to attain educational parity with the other communal groups. He believed, however, that Syed Ahmad Khan's estimate of the Muslim capabilities was 'a libel on the community, and should be given no importance.'[1]

Meanwhile, in Madras City, Muslim opposition to the Congress was gradually crystallizing. In April 1888, preliminary meetings were held to 'secure the co-operation of the various sects of Islam residing in Madras'[2] and to formulate the programme for 'a general meeting of the Muhammadans of Madras.' The meeting, held on 28 April 1888, was attended by about 100 Muslims, including Mahomed Mahmud Khan, secretary to the Prince of Arcot, Mohidin Sherrif Khan, surgeon at the Triplicane hospital, and Ahmad Mohidin Khan. A number of Muslim leaders, notably Humayun Jah Bahadur, Mahomed Abdullah Badsha, Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin and Walji Lalji Sait, were 'conspicuous by their absence.' The meeting passed a number of resolutions, including a vote of regret at the approaching departure of Lord Dufferin. The central resolution, however, related to the question of Muslim participation in the Congress. The meeting agreed, for 'divers reasons', that it was undesirable for the Muslims to be identified with this movement. Mahomed Azam, moving this resolution, discussed the dangers to the Muslims

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1. The Madras Standard, 2 April 1888.

2. The Madras Standard, 9 May 1888.

inherent in the Congress demand for representative institutions. He believed that both the Hindus and Muslims, if vested with the powers, would show 'much less liberality or forbearance' to each other than the British rulers. He felt that the British, 'by their instincts, their antecedents, and education', could be relied upon to 'hold the scales between our Hindu friends and ourselves.' The meeting also endorsed the stand that Syed Ahmad Khan had assumed on the various political questions affecting the Muslim community, and reposed its 'entire confidence in the general tenor of his policy.'[1]

With the growing polarization of Muslim opinion on the Congress issue, and the increased pressures that were being exerted to induce Muslims to join one or the other camp, there were anxieties among certain Muslim leaders that the flame of communal animosity was being needlessly fanned. Mir Shujaat Ali, a Statutory Civilian, fearing communal disorders, appealed in June 1888 for a truce in the campaign that the rival camps were conducting to win over the uncommitted Muslims. On the one hand, he advised the anti-Congress Muslim leaders not 'to agitate <u>against</u> the Congress', but instead devote their energies to formulate their own programme and indicate where they differed with the Congress. As for the Congress supporters, he recommended caution and moderation in their campaign to enlist support for the movement, as well as recognition of the existence of an opposition to the Congress. Analysing Muslim attitudes towards the Congress, Shujaat Ali asserted that 'an overwhelming majority of thinking Musalmans in India have not joined it', though an exception were the coastal Muslims of Bombay. He attributed this partly to Muslim backwardness in western education and

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1. <u>The Madras Times</u>, 4 & 9 May 1888.

partly to Muslim misgivings about the Congress demand for representative institutions. Though he believed that western education might effect a gradual change in Muslim attitudes towards the Congress, he feared that any immediate campaign to alter Muslim thinking might only cause communal 'frictions.'[1]

Mir Shujaat Ali was not alone in calling for a truce in the campaign to enlist Muslim support for the Congress. M.D. Habibullah, President of the Vellore Literary Society and a strong supporter of the Congress, also adopted a similar line of reasoning in a speech that he delivered at Vellore in June 1889. Like Shujaat Ali, he believed that the 'majority of Musalmans' did not support the Congress. 'A Tyabji and a Bhimji, names however prominent in themselves, do not make up the whole community of Islam nor even the more influential portion of it.' Ascribing Muslim attitudes to their educational backwardness, Habibullah advised the Congress leaders to leave the Muslims alone:[2]

> They will be a burden to you. They will impede your way, they will mar your progress, leave them alone, and when the Promethean spark of knowledge has entered into and revived the dead bones of Muslim society they will join you unasked and unsolicited.

The proferred advice, though distasteful to many Congress leaders in Madras, did compel some rethinking on the existence of Muslim opposition to the Congress. John Adam, while discussing 'the Muhammadan question' in May 1888, conceded that the Muslims were deeply divided on the Congress issue. While urging Congress workers to resolve this Muslim dilemma as far as possible, Adam also advocated the desirability of recognizing the

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1. The Hindu, 1 & 13 June 1888.

2. The Hindu, 4 July 1889.

existence of an opposition to the Congress. He believed that Syed Ahmad Khan had been 'rather badly treated' for having the 'courage of his opinions', and emphasized the 'great advantage' of having an opponent who was 'no hidden enemy.'[1] With the formation of the United Indian Patriotic Association in August 1888, designed to rally the forces opposing the Congress, the existence of an opposition to the Congress movement could no longer be denied. Indeed, in November 1888, Norton virtually conceded that the Congress campaign to enlist Muslim support had failed,[2] although a number of Muslim leaders in Madras still remained in the Congress camp.

However, further setbacks lay in store for the Congress leadership in Madras. In January 1888, the draft constitution of the Congress, framed by a Committee set up at the Madras gathering, was published providing a general body of rules to regulate the working of the Congress movement. The draft constitution recommended the division of the 'Congress circles' into a number of 'electoral circles', based partly on the territorial principle and partly on the representation of special and minority interests. Each of these electoral circles were to be placed under the immediate control of sub-committees, while those constituted on the territorial principle were expected 'to secure a fair representation of the intelligent portion of the community, without distinction of creed, caste, race, or color.'[3]

While the other provinces were debating the merits of the draft constitution, the Madras Standing Congress Committee decided in the early

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1. The Madras Standard, 18 May 1888.
2. The Madras Times, 27 November 1888.
3. The Indian Mirror, 21 January 1888.

months of 1888 to implement that part of the draft constitution which recommended the formation of electoral circles. The entire Madras Presidency was divided into 43 electoral circles, 36 based on the territorial principle and 7 representing 'sectional' groups. Those electoral circles formed on the territorial basis consisted 'either of portions of a large city, a large town, a town with a portion of the surrounding district, or a town with the whole of the district of which it is the capital.'[1] The task of forming sub-committees in each of these electoral circles, in order to secure 'a regular and speedy despatch of all business connected with the Congress', proved to be a slow affair, with urban centres generally responding more speedily than the rural areas. Much of the initiative to form sub-committees was taken by the affiliated bodies of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, aided by some prominent Congress leaders in the metropolis. Lawyers visiting the mofussil during the summer vacation exhorted local leaders to carry out the instructions of the Madras Standing Congress Committee. For example, in August 1888, W.S. Gantz urged the formation of a district sub-committee in Malabar at a lecture that he delivered at Calicut.[2] More important was the 'political mission' that G. Subramania Iyer undertook in July-September 1888 to stir up mofussil politicians to form sub-committees. He visited Wallajanagar, Erode, Coimbatore, Lalgudi, Palghat and Calicut, and was generally successful in enlisting local support for the formation of district sub-committees. Other centres also followed suit, and by December 1889 the Madras Standing Congress Committee

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1. A.O. Hume, A Speech on the Indian National Congress, (London, ?), p 8.

2. The Hindu, 3 August 1888.

asserted that the formation of sub-committees in the urban areas was complete.[1]

However, the Madras Congress leadership was less successful in securing the co-operation of the minority groups. To ensure the representation of these interests in the Congress proceedings, the idea of 'sectional' electoral circles was evolved and invitations were issued to the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association, the two Muslim organizations in the metropolis, Madras Chamber of Commerce, Madras Trades' Association and Madras University to constitute themselves into separate electoral circles.[2] They were also urged to nominate their representatives to sit in the Madras Standing Congress Committee and depute delegates to the annual Congress sessions. There was some degree of optimism that the Madras Chamber of Commerce and the Madras Trades' Association would co-operate, especially as in recent years they had shown some sympathy for the reforms advocated by the Congress. But the reaction of these organized European interests was distinctly hostile. While both rejected the invitation in December 1888, some members of the Madras Trades' Association expressed their 'entire disapproval' of the activities of the Congress.[3] Whatever hopes there were of enlisting European co-operation vanished at this juncture, while European supporters of the Congress, like E. Norton and J. Adam, were 'unpopular' among their brethren.[4]

If the European abstention was not totally unexpected, the Eurasian withdrawal from the Congress in 1890 came as a surprize to the Congress

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1. Ibid., 25 December 1889.
2. A.O. Hume, A Speech on the Indian National Congress, p 9.
3. The Madras Times, 27 December 1888.
4. Two memorable speeches of Eardley Norton, (Lucknow, 1889), p 23.

leaders in Madras. Ever since the Ilbert Bill episode, White had gradually led the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association towards an alliance with the Indian associations in Madras, based on the principle of common interest. The advent of the Congress consolidated this partnership by providing the basis on which practical co-operation could be achieved on issues of common interest. The Eurasian body not only deputed delegates to the annual Congress sessions, but also nominated its representatives to sit on the Madras Standing Congress Committee. This policy of partnership with the Indians, however, was unpopular with 'a dissentient party' within the Eurasian body which wished to identify itself with the European community. Although there were frictions within the body, White's firm leadership made any change of policy impossible so long as he remained at the helm.

However, White died in February 1889, and this dealt the first blow to his policy of partnership with the Indians. Gantz, elected President in March, pledged to continue his predecesor's policy of working closely with the Congress.[1] In defending a policy which amounted to 'cutting adrift from the European and making common cause with the Native', Gantz asserted that the Eurasian leaders were not 'rushing headlong from Scylla to Charybdis.' On the contrary, he was convinced that the Eurasian minority should 'form an essential link in the well woven chain of this great National movement, whose influence has already spread from East to West, from long suffering and oppressed India to the Land of the brave, and the free, and the just.' He regarded the Congress leaders as 'neither Nihilists, Communists, Socialists, or Moonlighters' but rather 'honest,

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1. The Madras Mail, 4 March 1889.

sober-minded men who have thought out some of the most important political questions of the day, and who, year by year, have met and formulated in moderate and constitutional language our demands for reforms, the reasonableness of which are admitted on all sides.'[1]

Although Gantz's unequivocal pledge appeared to promise a new era of Eurasian co-operation with the Congress, his policy came to be challenged both from within and without the Eurasian body. Among the opponents of his policy were the Eurasians of Bengal. In October 1889, the President of the Bengal Eurasians criticized the Eurasian leadership in Madras for its continued participation in the Congress. He attributed this policy to the 'radical element' that dominated the Madras body, although he believed that 'the great majority of the Madras Association have not been persuaded by the eloquence of Mr. White and Mr. Gantz.'[2] Also at this juncture, Gantz's policy was challenged by C.S. Crole, a Member of the Madras Board of Revenue. While presiding over the anniversary meeting of the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association, Crole urged the Eurasian community to look towards the Europeans to attain their aspirations. 'It was not to the interest of the Eurasians', observed Crole, 'to throw themselves into the natives. It was their interest to join the Europeans, because the Europeans could get their wrongs redressed.' As for the Congress, he believed it was 'a movement of the native races of the country', still very much in its 'infancy' and afflicted with 'childish ailments.'[3]

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1. The Madras Mail, 4 March 1889.
2. Ibid., 24 October 1889.
3. The Madras Times, 8 October 1889.

How far these criticisms weakened Gantz's authority within the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association is unknown, but what undermined the policy of partnership with the Indians was Gantz's rather abrupt resignation from the Madras Standing Congress Committee in December 1890 following a misunderstanding over his selection to preside at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. The details of the misunderstanding are shrouded in some mystery, but Gantz gave the impression that his selection was baulked by the attitude of the Congress leaders in Madras. On 1 December, having telegraphed the Calcutta Standing Congress Committee of his acceptance of the offer, Gantz informed some of his Madras colleagues of the decision. On the following day, the Madras Standing Congress Committee met to discuss some of the issues arising out of the forthcoming Congress, and Gantz 'talked of going to Calcutta...in the character of President elect.'[1] What took place at the meeting is not clear, but three days later Gantz telegraphed Calcutta withdrawing his earlier offer to preside.[2] According to The Madras Times, Gantz's nomination had been 'demurred' at by the Madras leaders who had 'taken offence at not having been given the voice they wanted in the election of a President.'[3]

Gantz's withdrawal meant in effect the virtual dissolution of the Eurasian connexion with the Congress movement. White's policy of political partnership with the Indians, always unpopular with a 'dissentient party' within the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association, was finally overthrown in September 1891 when it formally decided against sending delegates to

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1. The Madras Times, 15 December 1890.
2. Ibid., 9 December 1890.
3. Ibid., 15 December 1890.

the Congress session in Nagpur.[1] The Eastern Guardian, while discussing the reversal of White's policy, asserted that the 'dissentient party' had grown in strength over the years and converted the majority of the members within the Eurasian body to the new policy of non-co-operation with the Congress.[2] Frederic Rowlandson, who succeeded Gantz as President in September 1891, attributed the Eurasian and European attitude to the failure of the Indian leaders to adopt 'a liberal policy towards the alien immigrants.' He claimed in 1897 that there were still 'no signs of Educated India displaying any greater breadth of view, or of the inauguration of a new departure in her attitude towards the immigrant in the land.'[3]

Almost simultaneously, as the Eurasians were estranged, pro-Congress Muslims also began to drift away from the movement. A partial Muslim breakaway had come in 1888, but such Muslim leaders as Humayun Jah Bahadur, Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin, Mahomed Abdullah Badsha and Walji Lalji Sait had continued to sympathize with the Congress and serve in the Madras Standing Congress Committee. During the early 1890's, however, the loyalty of these Muslims came under severe stress owing partly to the overt support that the Congress leaders gave to the 'Cow Protection Movement' and partly to the persistent Congress demand for representative institutions and simultaneous civil service examinations. The cow question, as the issue of music before mosques, had always been a fruitful source of Hindu-Muslim

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1. Ibid., 8 October 1891.

2. Cited in The Madras Times, 21 September 1891.

3. F. Rowlandson, 'The use to India of her resident European Christians', The Madras Review, III, No. 2, November 1897, p 377.

quarrel and, at times, led to violent riots. In 1889, the Cow Protection Movement was launched, aimed at preserving cattle from indiscriminate slaughter on ostensibly 'economic grounds.' Allahabad was the headquarters of the movement and its principal spokesman was Sriram Swamy who started an extensive tour in 1889 to establish local committees throughout the country.[1] In August-September 1889, he visited the main centres of South India, collecting funds, establishing committees, and even exhorting local leaders to memorialize the government 'that slaughter of cows should be prohibited by law.'[2] A public meeting in Madras City in August, attended by prominent Congress leaders, expressed sympathy with the aims of 'the Central Committee of the Cattle Memorial Fund' in view of 'the importance of the movement in its Agricultural, Commercial, Economic and Sanitary aspects.'[3] Eardley Norton, while supporting the resolution, also argued that 'the movement was of such great national importance that it could be included in the programme of the Congress.'[4] To pro-Congress Muslims, the fact that prominent Congress leaders had identified with a movement that had anti-Muslim overtones must have been a cause of some embarrassment.

Another issue which caused a similar perplexity to the pro-Congress Muslims was the Congress demand for the introduction of the elective system in India. Muslims generally were fearful of the possible repercussions that might flow from any concession to this demand. Syed Ahmad Khan, ever since he began to rally Muslim opinion against the Congress, had

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1. Supplement to the Indian Mirror, 23 June 1889.
2. The Madras Mail, 20 September 1889.
3. Ibid., 7 August 1889.
4. The Indian Mirror, 14 August 1889.

consistently opposed the elective system for fear of the Muslim minority being submerged by the Hindu minority. The pro-Congress Muslims in Madras could hardly ignore the weight of this objection nor act in complete disregard of the drift of Muslim opinion by endorsing the Congress demand. The passing of the Indian Councils Act of 1892,[1] though only a partial victory for the Congress leaders, only served to strengthen the solidarity among the Muslims in an effort to withstand any possible Hindu encroachment that might follow from the implementation of this concession.

However, it was the renewed Congress agitation for simultaneous examinations that ultimately drove the pro-Congress Muslims in Madras into the opposing camp. In June 1893, the House of Commons passed a snap resolution endorsing the Congress demand for simultaneous examinations. Throughout India, Congress organized mass meetings to demonstrate the country's 'entire satisfaction at the verdict of the House of Commons, and press earnestly for immediate practical application' of the resolution.[2] In Madras City itself, a public meeting was convened by the Madras Standing Congress Committee in August 1893, and it resolved that simultaneous examinations was an absolute necessity, 'not only to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the people of India, but also to ensure the adequate fulfilment of the promises contained in the Proclamation of 1858.' A petition to Parliament was adopted, welcoming the resolution and urging its immediate and full implementation.[3]

To the Muslim leaders in Madras, already alarmed by the growing Hindu

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1. The Congress agitation for constitutional reform is discussed in Chapter V.

2. The Madras Times, 11 August 1893.

3. Ibid., 2 August 1893.

influence in the administration of the country, the Congress demand for simultaneous examinations caused further anxiety. A counter-meeting was convened on 26 August 1893 to demonstrate Muslim opposition to this Congress demand. Presided over by Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin, for many years a strong Congress sympathizer, the meeting opposed the idea of simultaneous examinations on the grounds that it aimed at 'a complete extinction ultimately of the European element in the Civil Service.' In a petition to Parliament, the Madras Muslims described the demand for simultaneous examinations as embodying 'the political aspirations of Hindus only, or with more exactitude, of those two sections known as the Bengalis and the Brahmans.' Protesting against any concession to this 'microscopic minority', the Muslim memorialists contended that the moment was 'not ripe for the very rapid expansion of Hindu influence in the Administration, more especially in the executive branch.'[1]

Although the Congress demand for simultaneous examinations was baulked by the Indian Government, Muslim opinion in Madras became increasingly convinced of the need 'to organise some scheme that will concentrate Muslim public opinion.' The existing Muslim organizations, laregly owing to differences among its leaders, were unable to speak with authority or one voice for the Muslim interests, and had virtually vacated the political arena to the Congress and its 'red-hot radicals' who 'arrogated to themselves the power of controlling the destinies of the country' and even maintaining that 'the only legitimate opinion was their own opinion.' Nor were the Muslims happy with the attitude that the British authorities had adopted towards Congress agitation. While the Muslims had refrained from

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1. The Madras Times, 27 August 1893.

joining the Congress agitation, the British had imparted 'a certain fictitious weight' to this Hindu agitation by conceding the demands of the Congress.[1] It was evident to the Muslim leaders that to obtain 'equality of treatment with the Hindus', they must abandon their past policy of loyalty for one of constitutional agitation. An essential need was an active political organization, which would not only rally all 'patriotic and enlightened Musulmans', but also evolve a practical scheme for 'the political, social, moral and literary advancement' of the community. By February 1894, the idea had found general acceptance and a small committee, including Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin and Malji Lalji Sait, announced the decision to form 'a large Association in Madras' to advocate Muslim interests.[2] The Central Mahomedan Association, as the proposed body was called, was formally inaugurated at a public meeting in March 1894.[3]

As past Muslim divisions in the metropolis were rapidly dissolving as a result of the fears caused by Congress agitation, Muslims in the mofussil were generally responding to the call of the Muhammedan Educational Congress in December 1888 to organize 'educational Anjumans' to promote Muslim education.[4] Launched in December 1886 by Syed Ahmad Khan to distract Muslims from the Congress and its political agitation,[5] the Muhammedan

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1. Ibid., 27 August 1893.
2. The circular, explaining the reasons for starting the new body, is reproduced in The Madras Times, 26 February 1894.
3. The Madras Times, 9 March 1894.
4. The Madras Mail, 22 March 1889.
5. Syed Razi Wasti, Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement 1905 to 1910, (Oxford, 1964), p 7.

Educational Congress gradually became the focal point in uniting Muslim opinion in the country. In South India, its call to organize educational committees found support in centres of large Muslim concentration, and by 1895 Dindigul, Vizianagram, Cuddapah, Madura, Trichinopoly and Salem had formed separate Anjumans to advance Muslim education. With the Muslims displaying a greater organizational capacity to promote their interests, largely as a counterpoise to the 'Hindu' Congress, the arteries of communal separatism were gradually hardening in South India.

The extent to which the edifice of communal unity had crumbled since 1887 was thrown into sharp relief when the tenth session of the Indian National Congress met in Madras City in December 1894. The Madras Reception Committee, determined to repeat the success of 1887, exerted every means to enlist the co-operation of the various communal groups in Madras. The only positive response came from the Indian Christian community, with many of its prominent leaders serving in the Reception Committee.[1] The Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association did not respond to the Congress invitation, adhering loyally to the decision that it had taken in 1891. The focus of Congress efforts, however, were the Muslims, but the Central Mahomedan Association ended any hopes of Muslim rapprochement with the Congress by urging all Muslims to 'hold rigidly aloof' from the forthcoming Congress.[2] Although 18 Muslims eventually attended the Congress from the various parts of the Presidency, the important leaders were conspicuous by their absence. P. Rungiah Naidu, Chairman of the Reception Committee, gave expression to the disappointment of the Congress leaders when he conceded

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1. The Hindu, 25 August 1894.

2. The Madras Mail, 26 October 1894.

that 'an important section of our Mahomedan fellow countrymen have stood aloof from our movement.' [1]

1. Report of the Tenth Indian National Congress held at Madras, on the 26th, 27th, 28th, and 29th December, 1894, (Madras, 1895), p 14.

Chapter V

The Agitation for Constitutional Reform

To the Congress leadership in Madras, the early 1890's was a period of agonizing dilemma. To a large extent, this dilemma sprang from its conflicting aims of attempting to maintain communal and factional unity while at the same time demanding the fulfilment of its rather far-reaching and controversial programme of reform. In 1887, at a time when the implications of its programme were not fully grasped, an alliance of the various communal and factional interests in South India had been forged under the umbrella of the Congress. However, this alliance began to collapse as soon as ideological and personal conflicts began to emerge during the early 1890's, leading to the withdrawal of the Eurasians and Muslims from the movement. The Muslim withdrawal, as discussed in the previous chapter, was inevitable so long as the Congress leadership adhered to its demand for representative institutions and simultaneous examinations. However, the Muslims were not the only group to be estranged by these demands. The controversy surrounding the Cross Bill in 1890, when the merits of the elective system were challenged by T. Madava Row, also alienated the conservative politicians. This chapter seeks to outline the events that led to this controversy, and assess its implications on the Congress movement in South India.

I

'The expansion of the Legislative Councils', observed G. Subramania Iyer in June 1889, 'is the keynote of the programme of the Congress.'[1]

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1. The Hindu, 26 June 1889.

Indeed, ever since the first Congress assembled in Bombay, the reform of the Indian legislatures came to be regarded 'by far the most important question that will engage the attention of the Congress.'[1] The proposed reform, as The Hindu explained in 1887, was 'the corner stone of our political future. It is the centre of the ambition of our National Party. They believe it to be the panacea more or less of most of the Indian maladies.'[2]

In urging the reform of the Indian Legislative Councils, the Congress was neither enunciating a new doctrine of change nor demanding a fresh departure in Indian constitutional history. Ever since the early 1850's, when the renewal of the East Indian Company's Charter came up for discussion, the idea of a 'representative' legislature had been actively canvassed in the various provincial capitals. At this time, the British Raj discharged its functions without any form of popular interference or legislative check. Enjoying almost unrestrained power, officials worked with the 'utmost secrecy', often concealing their transactions from 'the least shadow of knowledge on the part of the people.'[3] To break this secrecy and impose some element of check on the activities of the executive, the Madras Native Association called for the erection of legislative bodies in December 1852, consisting of an even number of officials and non-officials, with the latter chosen by the Governor from a number of popularly elected candidates. A 'popular element' was also to be inserted

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1. The Indian Mirror, 12 December 1886.

2. The Hindu, 19 January 1887.

3. Supplementary petition to the Imperial Parliament from the members of the Madras Native Association, 21 May 1853, p 6.

into the Supreme Legislative Council, with the right of representation being guaranteed to all provinces. While disavowing any idea of responsible government for India, the Madras Native Association expressed its belief that the formation of separate legislature, distinct from the executive, was 'a grand desideratum for the just and efficient government' of the country.[1]

The idea of a representative legislature also enjoyed a measure of European support in Madras. In a joint memorial to the Secretary of State for India in April 1859, the European and Indian leaders in the metropolis affirmed their belief that the moment had arrived for the formation of 'a Representative Government to a certain reserved and limited extent' in India. They urged the creation of legislative bodies in every Presidency, partly composed of non-officials nominated to represent the various communal and economic interests, with the power of veto being vested in the hands of the executive.[2] What the proposed scheme envisaged, as J.B. Norton explained, was 'not popular elections, party contests, the overthrow of a Ministry or Cabinet by an adverse vote', but rather the representation of the 'interests of all classes' in the administration.[3]

This agitation for some form of non-official representation, coupled with the calamitous events of 1857-8, convinced the ruling authorities of the desirability of introducing a non-official element into the organs of Indian administration. While the claim for non-official participation in the Indian legislatures was recognized, no sympathy was evinced for any

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1. Petition to the Imperial Parliament from the members of the Madras Native Association, 10 December 1852, pp 37-8.

2. The Madras Daily Times, 22 April 1859.

3. Ibid., 27 September 1859.

far-reaching experiment in representative government. 'To talk of Native representation,' said Sir Charles Wood in the House of Commons, 'is...to talk of that which is simply and utterly impossible.'[1] Nor was there any intention of creating autonomous legislatures in India, independent or overriding the executive branch of the government. Wood warned Sir William Denison, Governor of Madras (1861-6), against 'doing anything which recognises or gives the appearance of a separate existence' to the legislative council.[2] The provisions of the Indian Councils Act of 1861 fully bear out the reservations which the Indian authorities had either on conceding the demand for representative institutions or of permitting the legislatures to develop into miniature parliaments. Both at the centre and in the Presidencies, the executive councils were enlarged, for purposes of legislation, to admit 'Additional' members, drawn from officials and non-officials. The right of selecting Additional members was vested with the government with the restriction that not less than half its nominees should be non-officials. The powers of the provincial legislatures remained limited: subjects relating to Indian debt, taxation, army and foreign relations were outside their sphere of competence, while all bills emanating from them only became law when assented to by the Supreme Government.[3] Though a cautious reform, the measure was generally welcomed in Madras where interest came to be mainly focused on the manner in which the right of nomination was exercised by the Madras Government.

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1. Hansard, clxiii, p 641.

2. Wood Papers, Eur. MSS. F. 78, Letter Book X, Wood to Denison, 26 June 1862.

3. PPHC, II, 1861 (162), East India Council, &c., pp 11-3.

It was not until the late 1870's that concerted agitation began in Madras for a further instalment of constitutional reform. The inadequacies of the Act of 1861 became increasingly apparent, and the local press voiced the dissatisfaction that prevailed in South India. Writing in The Madras Times in March 1877, William Digby lamented that the Madras Legislative Council, far from being 'the centre of interest and the pivot of political activity', was being treated with 'provoking nonchalance' by the educated elite.[1] As a remedial measure, Digby advocated[2] the enlargement of the powers of the legislature and the admission of the elective principle in the choice of its non-official members. The provincial councils were to have powers of discussing the budget, rights of interpellation, and have control over provincial expenditure except those relating to fixed establishments. Non-officials were to be chosen by an electorate drawn from jury lists, owners of property, and those paying a certain profession tax.[3]

Although disagreeing in details, the Indian-owned press in Madras echoed Digby's call for the reform of the Indian legislatures. The Hindu, in an editorial in January 1881, advocated local self-government to provide 'preliminary training' to Indians in the novel art of representative government. In calling for the elective system in local bodies and provincial legislatures, the paper urged Indian leaders to launch a 'persistent

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1. The Madras Times, 3 March 1877.

2. Ibid., 19 March 1877.

3. Digby lamented in 1881 that the agitation he had hoped to initiate had led to no fruitful result. 'It made a slight ripple on the surface of everyday talk, and then passed away.' W. Digby, Indian Problems for English Consideration, (Birmingham, 1881), pp 55-6.

and zealous' agitation to secure the 'elective franchise to the people.'[1] The Swadesamitran, while criticizing the system of nomination in August 1882, contended that official nominees were men of wealth who were neither intelligent nor acquainted with the mode of framing laws. It advocated the election of non-officials, based on the territorial principle, with each district returning two members to the provincial legislature.[2]

By January 1884, when Lord Ripon visited Madras, there was a general consensus of opinion in South India on the need to reconstruct the Indian legislatures on an enlarged and representative basis. Although almost every political body which presented an address to the Viceroy touched on this issue, it was only the Ripon Reception Committee in the metropolis that went to the length of spelling out a clearly formulated scheme. Its central demand was the infusion of 'a really popular element in the Indian Legislative Councils', a claim that was justified by the great changesthat had taken place in the country since 1861, especially 'the diffusion of education, the growth of a loyal public spirit and a genuine desire to accept civil responsibilities.' The proposed elective scheme envisaged the division of the entire Presidency into five or six units, with the Municipal and Local Boards within each unit returning a member to the Madras Legislative Council. The elected members of the Provincial Councils were in turn to select one or more members to the Supreme Legislative Council. These reconstructed bodies were to have powers of discussing the budget, exercise the right of interpellation, and demand for certain official papers to be laid on the table. A reform along these lines,

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1. The Hindu, 26 January 1881.

2. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, August 1882, p 3.

argued the Ripon Reception Committee, would prevent 'any misconstruction of the acts of Government.'[1]

Fortified by this prevailing consensus of opinion, the Madras Mahajana Sabha decided to accord the issue a prominent place in its Conference agenda. At the first Conference which began on 29 December 1884, M. Viraraghava Chariar presented a lengthy critique on 'Indian legislation and Indian Legislative Councils.'[2] He discerned 'serious defects' both in the Act of 1861 and its implementation. The Act of 1861, he contended, had only invested limited powers to the Indian legislatures, while excessive official interference had reduced them to 'a simple Registration office where the projects of the Executive, however unpopular and ill-suited as regards time and place, are correctly copied and recorded and preserved.' Another complaint was the undue restrictions imposed on the non-officials. Viraraghava Chariar believed that non-officials could have been more numerously nominated under the provisions of the Act, but found that 'in most cases Government stints its allowance of the non-official element to the least possible extent.' Moreover, non-officials had not been encouraged to voice their 'independent and conscientious convictions', but merely endorse official action. Hence, non-official opinion had not exercised the degree of influence in Indian legislation anticipated in 1861, and he attributed the 'several undesirable laws' that had been enacted to 'the sole and single circumstance that the Indian legislatures are not constituted so as to shed on them the light-the heavenly light - of popular

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1. The Madras Mail, 16 February 1884.

2. This paper is reproduced in extenso in Proceedings of the /First/ Conference of Native Gentlemen, pp 1-19.

opinion and local knowledge.'

In calling for a further instalment of constitutional reform, Viraraghava Chariar alluded to the many changes that India had undergone since 1861. The Indians, he claimed, were 'no longer a stationary people' and had 'to a very great extent outgrown the conditions of the past.' The Act of 1861, he asserted, offered 'little room for improvement' to be usefully adapted to the demands of a changed situation. In short, Viraraghava Chariar believed that the time had arrived to take a new departure by introducing 'the principle of representation' in the Indian legislatures. 'No evil is likely to follow from such a course', he observed, 'but much strength to Government, as more confidence will be reposed in them by the people.' The Conference, while resolving that the provincial legislatures as constituted afforded 'little room for the successful expression of popular opinion and fail to command that degree of confidence which is so needful for their efficient working', dispersed on the understanding that a draft scheme be prepared for submission to the government after adoption at the next Conference.[1]

When the second Conference of the Madras Mahajana Sabha assembled at the metropolis on 23 December 1885, a draft scheme prepared by the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha and approved by the affiliated bodies was tabled for discussion. The scheme, endorsed without any modification at the Conference and subsequently forwarded to the Secretary of State, departed little from the proposals that Viraraghava Chariar had expounded

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1. The Madras Mahajana Sabha. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, (Typescript copy), Appendix II.

a year earlier. It recognized the reasons that rendered the Act of 1861 both 'tentative and limited in scope' and 'exclude all forms of elective principle in the choice of members.' But since the Act came into operation, 'far-reaching changes' had occurred in India, especially the growth of education and 'a deeper sense of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship.' The need for 'a policy of utilizing the mass of non-official intelligence which has been continually accumulating' was emphasized, while at the same time pointing out that the Act of 1861 fell 'far short of the requirements of altered conditions' to 'beneficially employ the non-official talent.' In urging the introduction of the elective principle, the Madras Mahajana Sabha weighed carefully the difficulties inherent in its application. The question of the electorate posed the greatest problem. It was at once conceded that universal franchise was not feasible, but it was believed that a start could be made with 'a limited electorate, provided that such an electorate might be shown in its turn to have been formed on an elective basis.' Inevitably, the Madras Mahajana Sabha looked towards the Municipal and Local Boards to furnish the 'materials for the formation of such a limited electorate', with each province converting them into electoral bodies on a territorial or population basis. Other institutions, like Universities and Chambers of Commerce, which had 'acquired a fairly pronounced representative status', were to be given seats in the provincial legislatures. The importance of minority representation was recognized, and the scheme urged that each communal group should possess seats in proportion to their numerical strength. The Madras Mahajana Sabha also demanded increased powers for the Councils, with the elected members enjoying the right of interpellation 'on matters of administration, finances

and other vital topics.'[1]

As the first elaborate scheme that was enunciated by an Indian political organisation for the reconstruction of the Legislative Councils, it reflected some obvious defects. One shortcoming was the undue preoccupation with the provincial legislatures to the virtual neglect of the Supreme Legislative Council. Even the proposals for the reform of the provincial bodies left some degree of ambiguity. For example, although the scheme recognized the importance of minority representation, it did not spell out the way in which it could be achieved. Again, the scheme did not specify the proportion of elective seats in the reformed legislatures. However, the significance of the scheme far outweighed its defects. On the one hand, the Madras Mahajana Sabha had made some attempt to grapple with the problems inherent in any discussion of representative government in India, viz. the question of suitable electorates, and the nature of powers to be conferred on elected members. Equally significant, the scheme reflected the mainstream of political thinking in Madras. The moderate and pragmatic manner in which the scheme was drafted and accepted foreshadowed, to some extent, the important role that the Madras politicians were to play when the Congress made the question of constitutional reform the keystone of its early platform.

Within a few days after the termination of the second Conference of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, the demand for the reform of the Indian Legislative Councils found its national echo at the first session of the Indian National Congress. The Bombay Congress advocated the expansion of

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1. IHP (Public), Vol. 2703, November 1886, Memorial of the Madras Mahajana Sabha to Secretary of State, 23 December 1885.

the legislatures, both at the centre and in the Presidencies, by the admission of 'a considerable proportion of elected members.' Non-officials were to be vested with the right of interpellation, while the budget was to be submitted for discussion. Although the executive was given the power of veto, the Congress wanted a Standing Committee of the House of Commons to consider formal protests that might be recorded by majorities whose proposals had been vetoed. While enunciating the principles of reform it was seeking, the Congress also recognized the importance of formulating a detailed scheme whereby the reform could be effectively implemented. Hence, when the Bombay sessions ended, a small band of Congress leaders met to discuss the details of the scheme. A body of 'provisional rules'[1] was drafted and circulated throughout the country as the basis of discussion and adoption at the next Congress session. The rules secured general support of the Congress leadership, and after eliciting the views of certain influential officials, including Lord Dufferin,[2] they were adopted at the Calcutta Congress in December 1886.[3]

The Congress proposals urged that the strength of the Indian legislatures be 'materially increased', with not less than one-half being

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1. The rules are reproduced in The Old Man's Hope. A Tract for the Times, (Calcutta, 1886), Appendix.

2. According to Hume, Dufferin scrutinized the draft resolutions before they were discussed at the Calcutta Congress. The original resolution on the reform of the legislatures also aimed at excluding the Viceroy and Governors from their deliberations, but on Dufferin's objection this part of the resolution was dropped. Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43616, Hume to Ripon, 13 January 1889.

3. The Indian Mirror, 7 January 1887.

elected, one-fourth ex-officio, and the rest nominated from officials and non-officials. Although this placed the officials in a minority, the right of veto rested with the executive, though reasons were to be furnished every time it was invoked. Much thought was given to the difficult question of the electorate. In Bengal and Bombay, it was believed that the right of election might be vested either with the local bodies or an electorate constructed on the basis of certain educational and pecuniary qualifications; in Madras, the electorate was to be either local bodies or an 'electoral college' composed of members partly elected and partly nominated by the government; while in the North-Western Provinces, Oudh and the Punjab, an electoral college was to exercise the right of election. While recognizing the need for flexibility to meet the peculiar circumstances in the different provinces, the Congress resolution urged that 'care must be taken that all sections of the community and all great interests are adequately represented' in the enlarged legislatures. However, the Congress was by no means content with the adequacy of its proposals: in a separate resolution, it urged all political associations in the country to agitate for the formation of a Commission 'to enquire exhaustively into the best method of introducing such a tentative form of Representative Institutions into India.'[1]

The Congress scheme, spelt out at Calcutta, came under strong criticism in certain quarters. The Anglo-Indian press was highly critical of the Congress demand for a non-official majority in the enlarged Councils. The Bombay Gazette, for example, regarded this provision as 'a serious

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1. Report of the Second Indian National Congress, pp 41-3.

mistake', for it aimed at the introduction of a representative government in 'a society essentially unfitted for it.' It asserted that the government for the moment must rest with the executive and not with 'any shifting majority of untrained politicians.'[1] Some Congress leaders in Bengal, on the other hand, were opposed to the idea of the Congress formulating a detailed scheme rather than confining itself 'to a mere enunciation of the reform.' The Hindu Patriot called the Congress proposals 'a closet constitution, drafted in haste and worded very clumsily' and would only give rise to 'much adverse criticism' from the opponents of the Congress. 'The Attempt', The Hindu Patriot, argued, 'was a mistake. It was not for the Congress to devise constitutions but to formulate in the fewest words what was really wanted.'[2]

These criticisms, however, were immediately repudiated by the pro-Congress organs. The Indian Mirror, for example, justified the decision to formulate a detailed scheme on the grounds that it was wanted by some of 'the highest authorities in England and India.' It claimed that the scheme, far from being hastily conceived, was only drafted after extensive consultations between the various provinces, while 'infinite pains' were taken in wording the final resolution.[3] The Hindu argued that the necessity to spell out the details sprang partly from the desire to demonstrate to the government that the Congress proposals were 'reasonable and practicable', and partly to allay any fears that might have been aroused among the Muslims and Europeans owing to a misunderstanding of the Congress position.

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1. Cited in The Indian Mirror, 6 January 1887.
2. Cited in The Indian Mirror, 6 January 1887.
3. The Indian Mirror, 7 January 1887.

However, it asserted that there was neither rigidity nor finality about the Congress proposals, and the government was at liberty to initiate a full-scale inquiry before deciding on any legislation.[1]

II

Liberal official thinking in India had also begun to recognize the shortcomings of the Indian Councils Act of 1861. In 1871, Lord Mayo had drawn attention to the 'unfortunate position' that the Indian Government occupied owing to the absence of an 'assembly or any means of discussion similar to that which prevails in other countries, whereby members of Government can give an immediate reply to statements made, and administer on the spot the negative to extravagant and inaccurate assertions.' Mayo also wanted the functions of the provincial legislatures to be enlarged, especially to include the discussion of the annual budget in the hope of giving due publicity to the estimates of the year.[2]

Mayo's proposals, though they proved premature, were revived by Lord Ripon a decade later. In a letter to the Secretary of State in December 1881, Ripon discussed at length the defects of the existing Councils, the reforms that might be introduced, and the advantages of governing the country in accordance with public opinion. The existing Councils, Ripon complained, had 'little or no representative character', provided 'the Government very little, if any, assistance in ascertaining the state of public opinion', and were generally regarded 'a sham'. In order to

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1. The Hindu, 19 January 1887.

2. Hira Lal Singh, Problems and Policies of the British in India 1885-1898, (London, 1963), p 86.

stimulate a 'real discussion' of the legislative measures, Ripon urged the introduction of a 'representative' element, with Municipalities returning a number of non-officials to the Supreme Legislative Council. While assuring the Secretary of State that no 'evil consequences' would result from reconstructing the legislatures, Ripon asserted that 'the policy of repression' was outdated and should give way to a policy of 'cautious but steady advance' in the direction of self-government:[1]

> I hold as strongly as any man that we must be careful to maintain our military strength; but, whatever may have been the case in the past, we cannot now rely upon military force alone; and policy, as well as justice, ought to prompt us to endeavour to govern more and more by means of, and in accordance with, that growing public opinion, which is beginning to show itself throughout the country.

Ripon's proposals failed to enlist the sympathy of the India Office and it was left to his successor, Lord Dufferin, to employ his persuasive powers to greater effect.

An Irishman, rather favourably disposed at least in the initial stages towards Indian aspirations,[2] Dufferin was under some pressure from the Congress and its European sympathizers to carry out some measure of constitutional reform in India. Like Ripon, Dufferin regarded as 'a legitimate and reasonable aspiration' the Indian wish 'to take a larger part in the management of their own domestic affairs.' But more important, Dufferin became apprehensive of the growing political agitation in the country, waged by the press and the political organizations. What alarmed Dufferin

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1. Ripon Papers, Correspondence with the Secretary of State, 1881, No. 70, Ripon to Hartington, 31 December 1881.

2. In a published interview in December 1886, Dufferin said: 'Remember I am an Irishman. And is it possible for me not to sympathise with the aspirations of a nation so similarly circumstanced as my own?' Cited in The Bengalee, 1 January 1887.

was the activities of certain extremist politicians who, he felt, were attempting 'to ape the tactics and organization of the Irish Revolutionaries', especially by organizing 'monster meetings among the ryots.' With this agitation threatening to extend to the more refractory parts of the country, notably the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab, Dufferin felt that the moment had arrived to review policy to meet this situation. The Dufferin strategy, which was spelt out to the Secretary of State in April 1886, was to concede certain reasonable demands of the Congress and 'announce that these concessions must be accepted as a final settlement of the Indian question for the next ten or fifteen years, and to forbid mass meetings and incendiary speechifying.' The principal concession that Dufferin had in mind was the liberalization of the Indian legislatures which he believed would enlist the 'loyal co-operation' of the more moderate and sensible Indian leaders. Their entry into the Councils, Dufferin argued, would 'popularize' government legislation which 'now have the appearance of being driven through the Legislature by brute force, and if they in turn had a native party behind them, the Government of India would cease to stand, as it does now, an isolated rock in the middle of a tempestuous sea, around whose base the breakers dash simultaneously from all the four quarters of the heavens.'[1]

Like Ripon before him, Dufferin's main problem was to convince the Secretary of State of the efficacy of his ideas. In January 1887, a few days after the Calcutta Congress had drafted its scheme for the reform of the Indian legislatures, Dufferin suggested to Lord Cross the desirability

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1. Dufferin Collection, Reel 517, No. 17, Dufferin to Kimberley, 26 April 1886.

of expanding the Provincial Councils by introducing an elective element. Voting was to be indirect, with non-officials being 'nominees of an elected college.' Dufferin was anxious for immediate action. 'The danger is lest the extreme Radical party and ignorant faddists in the British House of Commons may enter into an alliance with the Home Rule party in India.'[1] In granting this concession Dufferin also wanted some restrictions to be imposed on the freedom of the Indian press.[2] In March 1887, he indicated how the system of election could be satisfactorily operated in India. Non-officials were to be selected by the government from a list of names submitted by the Municipalities in the provincial capitals, Universities, Muslim organizations and other recognized bodies. In extending this 'very small and restricted political privilege to responsible bodies constituted by law', Dufferin believed that the government could 'take the wind out of the sails of the Associations, and greatly weaken their importance.'[3]

If Dufferin had hoped for an encouraging response to his proposals from the Secretary of State, he must have been deeply disappointed by the rather alarmist reaction of Lord Cross. While urging 'the greatest caution' in undertaking any reform of the Indian legislatures, Cross asserted that 'a wrong step would bring fatal consequences.'[4] Despite Dufferin's pleas, he remained unconvinced of the need to introduce representative institutions in India, contending that the demand was raised only

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1. Ibid., Reel 518, No. 1, Dufferin to Cross, 4 January 1887.
2. Ibid., Reel 518, No. 5, Dufferin to Cross, 1 February 1887.
3. Ibid., Reel 518, No.13, Dufferin to Cross, 20 March 1887.
4. Dufferin Collection, Reel 518, No. 5, Cross to Dufferin, 3 February 1887.

by 'the educated few.' If the Councils were to be enlarged by the admission of more Indian members, Cross insisted that they should be nominated by the government, albeit 'after consultation, if you like, but by the Government, by selection, not by election.'[1] Equally important, Cross felt that 'the interest of the Mahomedans must be considered quite as much as the interest of the noisy Bengalee Baboo' in any constitutional change that was envisaged.[2] Although he promised to give 'the most careful and early consideration' to any scheme that Dufferin might submit, his excessively cautious response disappointed the Viceroy who spent more than a year without troubling the Secretary of State with any scheme to reform the Indian legislatures.

Despite his failure to convince the Secretary of State, Dufferin remained strongly attached to the idea of reforming the Indian legislatures. In June 1888, when the question of 'strong' measures against the Congress was being discussed in certain official circles, Dufferin refused 'to enter upon any policy of repression' while the Councils remained unreformed. To Dufferin, any such action against the Congress appeared to be 'neither wise nor right' so long as 'a legitimate and constitutional channel' did not exist through which Indians could express their grievances.[3] In August 1888, while reiterating these views to the Secretary of State, Dufferin renewed his plea for some measure of constitutional reform in India. Anxious not to alarm Cross, he took care to emphasize that the

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1. Ibid., Reel 518, No. 8, Cross to Dufferin, 25 February 1887.

2. Ibid., Reel 512, No.15, Cross to Dufferin, 14 April 1887.

3. Dufferin Collection, Reel 533, No. 488, Dufferin to Colvin, 6 June 1888.

Government of India, far from being conducted on 'constitutional principles', would remain 'a benevolent bureaucratic despotism for many a long year to come.' However, there were 'abuses inherent in all despotism' which Dufferin wished to neutralize in India by providing 'legitimate facilities' to the educated classes to make known their grievances. 'The existing Councils', observed Dufferin, 'do not afford these facilities.'[1] The Secretary of State gave a cautious promise to consider any proposals,[2] and this was seized by Dufferin to constitute a Committee to draft a scheme for the reform of the provincial legislatures.

The scheme evolved by the Dufferin Committee in October 1888 related solely to the reconstruction of the provincial legislatures of Bengal, Bombay and Madras. The Committee recognized at the very outset that the time had arrived when the scope and functions of these Councils could be enlarged 'not only with safety, but with advantage to the administration.' However, it believed that any changes envisaged should seek 'to develop established methods, and not to introduce new and untried ones.' The expanded provincial legislatures were to incorporate the 'representatives of the more important interests' in the country, which the Dufferin Committee wished to achieve by constituting dual chambers or 'Divisions.' In the First Division, there were to be the representatives of the hereditary nobility, landed aristocracy and officials, chosen by direct election. The Second Division was to compose of the representatives of trading, professional and agricultural classes, chosen by a system of

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1. Cross Collection, Eur. MSS. E. 243, Vol. 25, No. 107, Dufferin to Cross, 17 August 1888.

2. Ibid., Eur. MSS. E. 243, Vol. 34, No. 4, Cross to Dufferin, 2 October 1888.

indirect election, with electoral divisions based on administrative, ethnic and linguistic considerations. The problem of finding an electorate received due attention, but the Dufferin Committee was satisfied that local bodies and statutory organizations, as Universities, could exercise the right of election, subject to certain regional variations. However, the protection of minority interests required a continuation of the system of nomination, exercised in a manner to redress any imbalance that the elective system might create. The Dufferin Committee also spelt out the enlarged functions of the Councils. Provincial finance and the budget were to be regularly discussed, while members were to be allowed 'to originate advice and suggestions on any subject connected with the civil administration of the Province.'[1] In Dufferin's view, this scheme was not 'a new departure, a starting upon fresh lines, or revolutionizing the constitution of our present Councils' but rather 'expanding, enlarging, multiplying, but not radically changing' the character of these bodies.[2]

Neither the Conservative Ministry nor the India Council regarded with favour the scheme that the Indian Government had drafted for the reform of the provincial legislatures. Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, believed that the proposals 'inaugurated the most important change undertaken since the dissolution of the Company, and that they ought to have been settled in communication with the Cabinet before any official step was taken in that respect.'[3] Lord Cross expressed surprise at having received a

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1. Cross Collection, Eur. MSS. E. 243, Vol. 25, No. 115, Enclosure, Report on the subject of Provincial Councils, 10 October 1888.

2. Ibid., Eur. MSS. E. 243, Vol. 25, No. 118, Enclosure 2, Minute by Dufferin, November 1888.

3. Hira Lal Singh, op.cit., pp 96-7.

'formal' dispatch from the Indian Government, as he had expected to be privately informed first of the details of the scheme. As for the scheme itself, though in sympathy with the idea of interpellation, the discussion of the budget, and the enlargement of the size of the Councils, Cross remained firmly opposed to the application of the elective principle in India.[1] However, a change of Viceroys in December 1888 when Lord Lansdowne replaced Dufferin, relieved the Home Government of further embarrassment and allowed the scheme to be shelved.

Lansdowne, however, was as determined as his predecessor in his efforts to secure some measure of constitutional reform, and he accepted both the substance of the proposals formulated by the Dufferin Government as well as the reasoning that prompted these concessions. On his arrival in India, Lansdowne proclaimed his intention 'to strengthen the hands of the moderate party' in India by demonstrating that British rule was 'not one of obstinate or uncompromising resistance to the demands for a moderate advance in the direction of institutions more representative in character than those at present enjoyed by the people of this country.'[2] Although he shared certain doubts about the wisdom of transplanting western political institutions in India, Lansdowne felt that some recognition of the elective principle was essential if the reform was to be accepted as an enduring political settlement. In February 1889, he decided to ascertain the reaction of the Governors who, though divided on the question of the elective

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1. Lansdowne Papers, Correspondence with Secretary of State, 1888-9, No. 2, Cross to Lansdowne, 28 November 1888; No. 10, Cross to Lansdowne, 18 January 1889.

2. Cross Collection, Eur. MSS. E. 243, Vol. 26, No. 1, Lansdowne to Cross, 11 December 1888.

principle, were agreed on the need to allow interpellation and the discussion of the budget.

With the Indian officialdom converted to the cause of constitutional change, and English liberal opinion becoming increasingly vocal in its demands, the Salisbury Ministry felt compelled to make some positive response. In March 1889, Lansdowne had announced that the Indian legislatures would be allowed the right of interpellation and discuss the budget, but it was then realized that these changes required parliamentary legislation, involving a recasting of the Indian Councils Act of 1861. The question was discussed by the Cabinet in June 1889 when it was decided to embark on fresh legislation. While agreeing that the size and functions of the Indian legislatures should be enlarged, the Cabinet rejected the elective principle on the grounds that it was 'unfamiliar to Oriental ideas, and might lead to grave and complicated difficulties.'[1] The Draft Bill to amend the Act of 1861, prepared by the India Office and forwarded to India in August, scrupulously avoided any reference to the elective principle.[2] The Indian Government, while accepting the Bill, suggested that some proviso be included to allow the 'resort to some form of election where the local conditions are such as to justify a belief that it might be safely and advantageously adopted.'[3] Lord Cross turned down the proposal, contending that the Cabinet would be unwilling to place 'such

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1. Lansdowne Papers, Correspondence with Secretary of State, 1889, No. 33, Cross to Lansdowne, 28 June 1889.

2. For text of the Draft Bill, see PPHC, LIV, 1890 (c.5950), Copies of, or Extracts from, Correspondence relating to the Numbers and Functions of the several Councils in India, pp 7-8.

3. Hira Lal Singh, op.cit., p 102.

enormous power' in the hands of the Indian Government, and in February 1890 introduced an unchanged Bill, known as the Cross Bill, for its first reading in the House of Lords.

III

As the Indian authorities were formulating a scheme to reform the Legislative Councils, the Congress began to reconsider some of the proposals that it had enunciated at Calcutta in December 1886. To a large degree, this process of reappraisal was directed towards evolving some acceptable formula for the formation of an electorate which was believed to lie at the very heart of the problem of introducing representative institutions in India. The Congress scheme of 1886, as The Bengalee observed, had left 'a door wide open for the adoption of any system that may please the Government.' Indeed, all that the Congress insisted was that 'the representative element should be recognised in the Government of the country', while any change undertaken should also provide adequate safeguards to minority interests.[1]

Although there was a strong body of opinion within the Congress which opposed 'any further elaboration of details in the scheme' on the grounds that it would 'present a wider flank to the attack of our oponents',[2] there was also an equally strong demand, emanating principally in Madras, to re-open the question of electoral system. At the second Congress session, the Madras leadership had expressed its preference for Electoral College rather than local bodies as the former system was regarded better

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1. The Bengalee, 8 January 1887.

2. Ibid., 10 December 1887.

suited to protect the minorities and ensure the return of the best candidates to the expanded Councils. However, the idea of Electoral College did not appeal to other provincial leaders, and this led the Calcutta Congress to propose different electoral systems to meet the demands of the various provinces.[1] But with the coming of the next Congress session, the plea for Electoral College was renewed in Madras. The Hindu, for example, expressed open dissatisfaction with the idea of investing local bodies with the right of returning members to the legislatures.[2] Eardley Norton echoed these views on the Congress platform in December 1887. He suggested as 'a reasonable and feasible' scheme the idea of Electoral College, composed of nominees of local bodies, Chambers of Commerce, Universities and government, to elect members to the Legislative Councils. Such an electorate, Norton contended, would 'practically represent the flower of the educated inhabitants of the Presidency.'[3] However, there was no response from the other provincial delegations, and the Madras Congress merely endorsed the scheme that had been evolved at the preceding session.

The arguments against any further elaboration of the scheme of 1886, which had prevailed at the Madras Congress session, began to weaken gradually under the weight of mounting criticism that came to be levelled against the Congress and its programme. Of this criticism, it was the fear of Muslim estrangement from the Congress that caused the greatest concern. Under the vehement and withering onslaught of Syed Ahmad Khan, who regarded

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1. The Hindu, 19 January 1887.
2. Ibid., 2 November 1887.
3. Report of the Third Indian National Congress, p 91.

the proposals for representative institutions as the path towards the extinction of Muslim rights, the Congress leadership was compelled to think of providing greater safeguards to minorities. In December 1888, the question became a matter of some urgency when Dufferin announced, at a speech at St. Andrew's Dinner, that he had submitted to the Secretary of State a scheme for the reform of the provincial legislatures. The Congress leaders, though jubilant that their main demand was near fulfilment, were dismayed by Dufferin's charge that they intended to take 'a very big jump into the unknown by the application to India of democratic methods of Government, and the adoption of a Parliamentary system.'[1] Amidst such charges and counter-charges, the Congress leaders agreed that further confusion should be avoided by defining afresh the position of the Congress on this important issue.

In February 1889, A.O. Hume addressed the various Standing Congress Committee in the country calling their attention to the need to record in 'greater detail' how the Congress thought that 'a representative element might be introduced into the administration.' Hume claimed that his inquiries had revealed that in 'one or two particulars' the scheme evolved in 1886 did 'not fully represent the present feeling on the subject.' Of some significance was the change of opinion on the question of the electorate. Hume asserted that the Congress as a whole had come to accept the idea of Electoral College in preference to rival schemes. Electoral Colleges were to be constituted in every province, with its members partly elected and partly nominated. The strength of the Electoral College was

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1. The National Congress vindicated. Or Mr. Eardley Norton versus Lord Dufferin, (Lucknow, 1889), pp 1 & 8.

to be determined by the size of population of the province, with every million people returning five members. In outlining what he regarded as the broad guidelines of Congress thinking on this issue, Hume asked the Standing Congress Committee to indicate whether the scheme he had sketched 'fairly represent the general opinion of the present day.'[1]

To the Congress leadership in Madras, this circular from Hume provided an opportunity to fashion its views at some length, and even endeavour towards convincing the Congress as a whole of the viability of its proposals. A Sub-Committee was immediately formed, consisting among others E. Norton, J. Adam, W.S. Gantz, P. Ananda Charlu, G. Subramania Iyer and Salem Ramasamy Mudaliar, and it met 'week after week' at Norton's private residence[2] to draft 'a more practical scheme' for the reform of the Indian legislatures. As Adam remarked, it was 'a very long and troublesome job', with the Sub-Committee 'working under the limitations imposed upon us by our enemies.'[3] In drafting its scheme, the Sub-Committee, as G. Subramania Iyer explained, was guided by three fundamental considerations: Firstly, that the scheme should not give the impression that it would lead to the transfer of 'the power of ultimate control from the Government of India, representing Great Britain, to the hands of the native community of this country.' Secondly, it must be 'a feasible, a practical, and a simple measure; it must be one that could be worked out without detriment to the interests of the country, and without detriment to the supremacy of British

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1. Supplement to The Hindu, 15 June 1889.

2. E. Norton, 'The Indian National Congress', Indian Politics, (Madras, 1898), p 26.

3. Journal of the East India Association, XXIV, 1892, p 144.

power in the country.' And thirdly, the scheme should give 'to a large section of the people...a substantial measure of political power.'[1] The Madras scheme, as it came to be called, was approved by the Madras Standing Congress Committee in May 1889, and in the following month it was printed and circulated freely throughout the country for discussion and criticism.[2]

The Congress leadership in Madras, while agreeing with Hume upon 'the general outlines of the contemplated reform', reaffirmed in its scheme that what was sought was not 'a representative Government' but 'a partially representative Legislative Council.' In asking for the admission of the elective principle, the Madras leaders urged that the concession granted should be 'pure and undefiled', free from official interference, and an assured step in the 'gradual and progressive' advance towards popular government. In drafting its proposals for the implementation of the elective principle, the Madras scheme emphasized three principles: 'First, that the electorate should be as large as possible; secondly, that the elections should be in their essence popular; thirdly, that they must be free from any Government interference, direct or indirect.'

The Madras scheme recognized that the solution to the problems of introducing the elective principle in India, including the question of minority representation, lay in the discovery of an acceptable formula for the constitution of the electorate. As the idea of universal franchise found little favour, either in official or Congress circles, the area of choice was narrowed down to either utilizing local bodies and statutory

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1. Report of the Fifth Indian National Congress held at Bombay, on the 26th, 27th and 28th December, 1889, (London, 1890), p 18.

2. The Hindu, 22 June 1889.

institutions or relying upon an Electoral College to return members to the legislatures. Ever since the Congress session in December 1886, the Madras leaders had shown their dislike of local bodies being utilized as an electorate, and when the Sub-Committee discussed this issue in the early months of 1889, there were none to champion the cause of local bodies. Part of the objection to local bodies stemmed from the belief that they were 'not yet strong enough to bear this additional weight' which this new responsibility would thrust upon them.[1] Then, there was the question of factional strife within the local bodies, which was already evident within the Municipalities in South India, and it was feared that this new responsibility would increase factional squabbles and endanger the interests of the community. Moreover, election by local bodies did not promise to resolve the problem of minority representation.[2] But underlying these objections, however, was the fear that these institutions lay 'absolutely at the mercy of the Government.' The implementation of Ripon's scheme for Local Self-Government had not given general satisfaction to the Congress leaders in Madras, and it was felt that the officials were vested with excessive discretionary power to interfere in their functioning.[3] To hand over the right of election to these local bodies, as Norton contended, was 'to hand over to the Government, in the velvet-glove disguise of these various corporations, the power to do absolutely what

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1. Journal of the East India Association, XXIV, 1892, pp 144-5.

2. The Hindu, 4 December 1889.

3. For example, the Governor could remove any member of the local bodies on grounds of preserving public peace. The Madras Review, I, No. 3, p 246.

they wished with your electorate.'[1]

It was but logical that the Madras leaders should opt for the Electoral College rather than local bodies to exercize the right of returning the elective element to the Indian legislatures. The Madras scheme advocated 'a strong Electoral College, numerically, morally, and intellectually', filled by the leaders of the different communities, chosen for their wisdom as much as for their past services to the community. 'If its members be the ablest and most representative men in the Presidency of Madras, they will be animated in the choice of members of Council by a high and strict sense of duty to themselves and their electorate.' Moreover, the Madras leaders were hopeful this scheme would allay communal fears, and that the Electoral College would demonstrate its ability to 'rise superior to sectarian prejudice.'[2] Similarly, it was reasoned that the representatives returned to the Councils would 'owe their position to their intelligence, integrity, and social position and influence, in the native community, and not to mere demagogic gifts.' Another merit of the Electoral College, it was claimed, was that it would compel a body of leaders in every district 'to educate and interest themselves in the public affairs of their country.'[3]

Having weighed the advantages of the Electoral College, the Madras Sub-Committee took the 'greatest pains' to define its composition and functions. It was proposed that an Electoral College should be established in every province, having members elected partly on a territorial and

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1. Report of the Fifth Indian National Congress, p 14.
2. Supplement to The Hindu, 15 June 1889.
3. Report of the Fifth Indian National Congress, pp 16-8.

partly on a 'sectional' basis. The strength of the Electoral College was to be determined by population, with every million of inhabitants returning 20 members. In fixing the strength of the Electoral College at a level considerably higher than suggested by Hume, the Madras leaders argued that this was necessary 'to represent the great varieties of caste and creed, of wants, of interests and of opinion throughout the country.' The franchise, and the right of membership of the Electoral College, was extended to every resident in the province, above 21 years of age, able to read and write English or an Indian language, and paying a certain tax or a graduate of a University. Election to the College was by simple ballot, to be held once every three years. In order to ensure the representation of minorities, only four-fifths of the College were to be elected on a territorial principle; the remaining one-fifth being chosen by co-option by the elected four-fifths in a manner to ensure the minimum representation of the minorities in proportion to their numerical strength. According to the calculations of the Madras Sub-Committee, the Electoral College for the Madras Presidency would have about 600 members, of whom 480 would be elected on a territorial principle, and the rest co-opted to ensure that there would be at least 60 Muslims, 30 Europeans and 30 Eurasians.

The main function of the Electoral College was to elect a certain proportion of members to the Indian legislatures. Under the Madras scheme, half the total members of the Legislative Councils were to be chosen by the College, with the sole restriction that it should elect a minimum number of minority representatives corresponding to their numerical strength. Membership to the legislatures was open to every member of the Electoral College, or those possessing similar educational and property qualifications,

and the College was to meet in the provincial capital to carry out its function. Those elected to the Councils were to serve for a period of three years, and were entitled to claim travelling expenses.[1]

The idea of an Electoral College, which was the most conspicuous feature of the Madras scheme, provoked opposition from certain influential quarters. Among those critical of such an electoral system was Charles Bradlaugh, the 'Member for India' in the House of Commons since 1888 when the Congress enlisted his services. In July 1889, Bradlaugh declared his intention to introduce a Bill to reform the Indian legislatures at the next parliamentary session. In drafting a Bill, he studied previous Congress resolutions on the subject, as well as the Madras scheme, and came to the conclusion that it would be more expedient to utilize local bodies as electorates as it meant 'proceeding along the line of least resistance, and be preserving a continuity of policy.'[2] Though the Bradlaugh Bill, circulated throughout India in October 1889, left open the question of electorates to be settled at the coming Congress in Bombay,[3] his intervention helped to stir what was an old controversy within the Congress. On 24 November 1889, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha sent a circular to all Standing Congress Committees endorsing Bradlaugh's suggestion. Rejecting the proposal for Electoral College, the Poona leaders urged that it would be 'better and more practicable to utilize the representative constituencies already in existence that to create new ones.'[4] Bengal, though somewhat

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1. Supplement to The Hindu, 15 June 1889.
2. The Indian Mirror, 31 October 1889.
3. The Hindu, 10 October 1889.
4. The Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, XII, No. 1, 1889, pp 18-9.

divided on this issue, appeared to be more in agreement with Poona than with Madras. The Bengalee, edited by S.N. Banerjea, described the Madras scheme as 'somewhat novel and strange to the administrative machinery of the country, and it further appears to be far too cumbersome to be successful.' The paper urged the Congress to accept local bodies as electorates as they 'represent the intelligence, the culture and the wealth of the land.'[1] In the face of this opposition, the Madras Standing Congress Committee decided to set up a Sub-Committee on 25 November 1889 to report on the Bradlaugh Bill and resolve the conflict of opinion on the issue of electorate.[2] The report of the Sub-Committee accepted the Bradlaugh Bill in all details except the electorate. The idea of local bodies as electorates was strongly resisted on the grounds that they did 'not represent the people fully', and the Sub-Committee submitted a long statement in an effort to prove its case.[3] The issue was hence left to be resolved at the approaching Congress gathering in Bombay.

For some time before the Bombay Congress assembled, it was evident that the question of rival electoral schemes would dominate much of its proceedings. Interest in the gathering had already been heightened by the anticipated presence of Bradlaugh, while Hume's suggestion in November 1889 that there should be no Congress meeting in 1890[4] added a new significance to the Bombay meeting. In Madras, the Congress leaders were both determined and confident of their scheme being endorsed by the

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1. The Bengalee, 21 December 1889.
2. The Hindu, 26 November 1889.
3. Ibid., 9 & 21 December 1889.
4. Ibid., 26 November 1889.

Congress as a whole. W.S. Gantz, who had taken a prominent part in drafting the scheme, asserted that the Madras scheme was 'an embodiment of a practical and common sense view of the form which the proposed enactment should take.' Although Bombay and Bengal stood opposed to the scheme, Gantz believed that with the support of Hume and Bradlaugh Madras hoped to carry the 'main points' of its scheme. The main burden of 'the fighting', Gantz felt, would fall upon the shoulders of E. Norton, and he was confident that Madras could have 'no better champion' to espouse its cause.[1] Moreover, Madras was strongly represented at the Bombay gathering:[2]

> Madras has the satisfaction of having mustered very strong in Bombay on this important and unprecedented occasion. In the total number of delegates it is strong: it is equally strong in respect of the quality of its delegates. Most of its leaders of light and leading who could possibly be there and give the benefit of their counsel and co-operation are there. The Madras delegates have also devoted much of their time to mastering the details of the reform of Legislative Councils.

The actual arena in which the rival electoral schemes were debated was the small conclave of the Subjects Committee. Composed of the leading members of the Standing Congress Committees in the country, the Subjects Committee decided the issues to be debated at the Congress platform, framed the resolutions, and chose speakers to move each resolution.[3] After the speech by the President, Sir William Wedderburn, the Subjects Committee, numbering about 100, met under the chairmanship of Hume.

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1. The Hindu, 23 December 1889.

2. Ibid., 27 December 1889.

3. E. Norton, who had some personal experience of the working of the Subjects Committee, called it 'the Cabinet of the Congress' where 'all the real work of the Congress was done'. E. Norton, 'The Indian National Congress', pp 26-7.

After disposing of the less important issues, this Committee turned its attention to the rival schemes for the reform of the Indian legislatures. As expected, the question of the electorate proved to be the bone of contention. Bengal and Poona advocated local bodies, but Madras stood firmly for its Electoral College scheme, supported by Bombay City and other provinces.[1] The debate, 'which lasted late into the night of Thursday and took up the larger portion of Friday meeting', ended in a triumph for Madras. The Bradlaugh Bill was accordingly modified to incorporate 'the views ably maintained by the Madras delegates.'[2] The Congress resolved that one or more Electoral Colleges be established in each province, and they were to elect half the members to the Supreme and Provincial Councils. Minorities were to be represented, both in the Electoral Colleges and in the Councils, in proportion not below their numerical strength.[3] Eardley Norton, while proposing the resolution, contended that the scheme agreed to incorporate 'two great principles':[4]

> first, the great principle that we are to introduce for the first time in Indian political history the principle of election by the people; and, secondly, that we have taken into consideration, and respected the question, of the representation of the minorities of this country.

To the Madras leaders, the Bombay Congress represented 'an immense success.' W.S. Gantz, a delegate at the gathering, asserted that the Congress movement had 'developed all the elements of stability and permanence', and was 'within a measurable distance of reaping the fruits of

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1. The Hindu, 30 December 1889.
2. The Bengalee, 15 February 1890.
3. Report of the Fifth Indian National Congress, p xli.
4. Ibid., p 15.

a five years' agitation for the improvement of the Legislative Councils.'[1] To Norton, the achievements of the Bombay Congress were largely synonymous with the attempt to evolve a scheme for the introduction of the elective system in India. He rejected criticisms that the Congress resolutions were passed without any debate, cited as example the 'very animated discussion' that took place in the Subjects Committee over the Madras scheme, and the 'division after division that was taken on each of the leading clauses.' The acceptance of the Madras scheme, Norton explained, was not because of 'the brute force of any overwhelming majority' but that it deserved to be carried on its 'merits'.[2]

On 15 February 1890, a large public meeting was held in Madras City partly to appeal for funds to meet the expenses of the Congress Agency in London and partly to adopt a memorial to Parliament calling for the grant of 'partial representation' to the Indian people. Attended by the leaders from the mofussil, speeches were given in English, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu to explainthe objects of the meeting. The memorial to Parliament reiterated the demands that had become familiar in Indian political forums during recent years. Parliament was informed that India was 'taxed and legislated for without any degree of representation', a situation that led to 'unnecessary and oppressive hardships on the people.' While demanding 'a voice in the administration', the Madras memorialists expressed the hope that Parliament would approve the Bradlaugh Bill,[3] 'the Bill of the Indian people.'[4]

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1. The Hindu, 9 January 1890.
2. Ibid., 28 January 1890.
3. The Madras Times, 17 February 1890.
4. The Hindu, 4 February 1890.

IV

As it turned out, it was the Cross Bill that was introduced in Parliament in February 1890 much to the dismay of the Congress leaders. In Madras, this Bill received a mixed reception and created a rift within the ranks of the Congress leadership. The radical Congress leaders, especially Ananda Charlu and Norton, were deeply disappointed with the concessions held out by the Cross Bill and were determined to oppose it in its entirety. Ananda Charlu, writing in the columns of The Hindu, dismissed the Bill as 'a gigantic make-believe', framed to 'put a spoke in the wheel of constitutional movement like the Congress' and forestall the Bradlaugh Bill.[1] As for the new powers to the reformed Councils, Ananda Charlu argued that they would be 'a real and bona fide concession' if they were coupled with 'the privilege of proposing and adopting resolutions and demanding a division.'[2] Nor was he satisfied with the suggested increase in the number of non-official members, especially if the Councils were to represent 'all shades of opinion and feeling.'[3] The real source of dissatisfaction, however, was the non-recognition of the elective principle which the Congress had so vigorously advocated since 1885. To Ananda Charlu, the rejection of the elective principle showed that 'a strong consensus of opinion of educated intelligence in this country, absolutely counted for nothing with Lord Cross.' Northbrook's amendment, seeking to invest local bodies with the right of electing non-officials, was also unacceptable to Ananda

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1. Ibid., 8 April 1890.
2. The Hindu, 10 April 1890.
3. Ibid., 11 April 1890.

Charlu who believed that it did 'not go far enough, and even as far as it goes, it is too indefinite to be regarded as a present or an immediate concession.'[1] While claiming that 'nothing short' of the Congress scheme would satisfy the Indian people, he warned that its rejection by the Indian authorities would shake 'intelligent confidence in the integrity of British professions and in the rectitude of British administration.'[2]

A posture of defiance was also assumed by Eardley Norton. To him, the Cross Bill 'if it meant anything at all meant nothing.'[3] What he wanted, in 'the interest of good Government', was 'a Council which shall embrace a variety of men who shall represent a variety of pursuits and districts', but the Bill did not envisage the creation of such a legislature. Like Ananda Charlu, Norton's main complaint against the proposed measure was the non-recognition of the elective principle. 'A concession which confines itself to an extension in the number of members', remarked Norton, 'is no concession at all. So long as the principle of election is not conceded so long is reform a sham, a delusion, and a snare.'[4] To accept this Bill, he warned the Congress leaders, 'would mean that 'all the agitation, all the speaking, all the pains and all the trouble they had voluntarily subjected themselves to for the past 5 years, would be thrown away as so much smoke in the air.' Moreover, the acceptance of such a concession would mean that India would 'not get anything for five and twenty years to come.' What Norton

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1. Ibid., 15 April 1890.
2. P. Ananda Charlu, Letters on Indian Politics, (Madras, 1899), p 89.
3. The Madras Times, 17 March 1890.
4. The Hindu, 4 March 1890.

advocated was agitation with 'unceased energy and restlessness' to extort from the Indian authorities 'some recognition of the principle of election.' And until this concession was granted, Norton warned that Congress leaders would 'not merely continue the agitation that was at present going on, but they would make it 10 times greater and they would stir the people from East to West and North to South so that the Government should have no rest.' [1]

Waging an almost lone battle for the party seeking acceptance of the Cross Bill was T. Madava Row, 'the Nestor of Indian Statesmen', and a member of the Madras Standing Congress Committee. Writing in the columns of the Madras Times under the nom de-plume 'A Native Observer', Madava Row wanted the Congress leaders to accept 'with gratitude' the concessions held out in the Bill. As for the non-recognition of the elective principle, he saw no reason for despondency as 'great care and caution' was necessary in applying the principle in India. Moreover, he had faith in the system of official nomination, and was confident that the government would make 'the best possible selections' to the reformed Councils. 'I do not much care about the non-concession of popular election', observed Madava Row, 'because careful observation and experience convince me that popular election at present would have ensured the failure of extended Councils, whereas nomination would probably be their success.' [2] While suggesting the acceptance of the proposed Bill, he also advocated the dissolution of the Congress once

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1. Ibid., 1 May 1890.

2. The Madras Times, 5 March 1890.

the measure was passed.[1]

Madava Row's strong plea in support of the Bill, which ran counter to the sentiments that he had expressed on the Congress platform in December 1887,[2] provoked a sharp and bitter controversy in Madras. Both Norton and Ananda Charlu publicly rebuked him for his apparent volte face. 'It is a serious matter', said Norton in a speech in March 1890, 'that one of their men, of whom they could well be proud, who had achieved glory in his days, and whom the native community looked upon with admiration and respect, should make contrary statements in 1890, to those that he had made in 1887.' Madava Row's support of the system of nomination, Norton complained, had 'greatly impeded' the Congress effort to secure the recognition of the elective principle.[3] Attributing Madava Row's volte face to 'abnormally rapid' senility, Norton asserted that he was 'no longer a factor of any power' in Indian politics.[4] Ananda Charlu, on the other hand, regarded Madava Row's writings with some derision. He felt that though Madava Row had become 'markedly effusive, and has paraded his rapture in every newspaper in the city', he did not 'grudge him the pastime' as the 'practice gives him relief and affords him occupation.' As for those urging acceptance of the Cross Bill, Ananda Charlu regarded them as 'easy-going, easy-living and easily-

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1. Ibid., 8 March 1890.

2. When seconding the resolution on the reform of the Indian legislatures in 1887, which advocated the elective principle, Madava Row said: 'The matter requires no further exposition. We are all convinced. We thoroughly know and understand the whole thing. It is a matter which, nowadays, requires no demonstration whatever.' Report of the Third Indian National Congress, pp 86-7.

3. The Madras Times, 17 March 1890.

4. The Hindu, 4 March 1890.

gulled souls.'[1] In the Indian press, Madava Row became a target of growing criticism. The Madras Standard, for example, charged him of having 'betrayed his party' at the moment his support was needed,[2] while the Swadesamitran called him 'a traitor in the camp of the congressionists.'[3]

Madava Row reacted angrily to these criticisms, and in retaliation denounced both the Congress programme and its leadership. He deprecated the demand for the separation of revenue from judicial functions, contending that it was a 'mischievous' proposal aimed to benefit the pleaders while imposing 'an intolerable burden on the simple country population.'[4] Turning to the Congress demand for elective legislatures, he charged that this was an attempt on the part of the western-educated elite to exclude from these bodies 'all men of property and position as ignorant and useless.' Equating the Congress demands as merely the claims of this educated minority, he warned British rulers of the dangers of yielding to the 'impetuous and iconoclastic ambition of an imperfectly educated and impoverished class.' Rather than depending on this group, Madava Row urged that 'men of property and position and of common sense in relation to human affairs are really more eligible for the work of legislation', for they were the 'essential elements of stability and safety', would apply 'the brake to hasty, excessive, or mischievous

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1. The Hindu, 15 April 1890.
2. Ibid., 14 April 1890.
3. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, Week-ending 31 March 1890, p 6.
4. The Madras Times, 21 March 1890.

legislation',[1] and 'provide ballast lest the State vessel be upset' by 'those so-called educated men, who do not so much as know their own family and social affairs.'[2] With Madava Row's counterblast becoming increasingly an attack on the western-educated elite, an embarrassing political crisis began to hang over Madras during the months of March-April 1890. Realizing that his views enjoyed little support among the Congress supporters, Madava Row submitted his resignation from the Madras Standing Congress Committee in April 1890. While accepting his resignation, the Committee expressed 'regret that it was not tendered at an earlier stage.'[3]

Although Madava Row's opponents made much of his supposed 'change of front' and repeatedly charged him of 'political inconsistency' during the controversy over the Cross Bill, it must be emphasized that he had always been a reluctant supporter of the Congress and something of 'an enigma to several Madrassees.'[4] In 1887, when Madras played host to the Congress, Madava Row was 'wavering about the Congress' and only accepted the chairmanship of the Reception Committee after 'a regular struggle in his mind.'[5] Although his accession was 'universally acknowledged to be an event of the greatest possible importance, and one which spoke much for the reality and weight of the movement', he remained

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1. Ibid., 19 March 1890.
2. S.C. SrinivasaCharier (Ed.), Political Opinions of Raja Sir T. Madava Row, (Madras, 1890), p III.
3. The Madras Times, 28 April 1890.
4. Ibid., 28 March 1890.
5. V. Nagamiah, Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao, (Madras, 1915), p 103.

deeply suspicious of 'the youthful politicians of New India.' Hence, from time to time, he voiced his dissent of the activities of the Congress and its leaders. In January 1889, for example, while reiterating his support for the reform of the legislatures, Madava Row asserted that these bodies should 'only be consultative, and the supreme power should always be retained by the English Government.'[1] He was convinced neither of the efficacy of the elective principle nor of the need to constitute a Standing Committee of the House of Commons as the 'supreme authority in Indian matters.'[2] The former, as he warned Hume, was 'premature for India'[3] and he feared that the application of 'the wild and mischievous theories of Europe' might 'disturb' the tranquility of the country. Rather, he preferred to entrust the country's welfare to the Indian bureaucracy, 'a large, practical and highly trained body profoundly interested in the continuance of British rule in India.'[4] In January 1890, after the Madras scheme had been endorsed by the Bombay Congress, Madava Row expressed his belief that the original Bradlaugh Bill had 'a far greater chance of acceptance' by the rulers than the new scheme which would only lead to 'further discussion, further delay and prolong the existing state of things.'[5] He strongly urged the Congress leadership to secure 'a fair settlement' of the question and 'terminate the

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1. The Indian Mirror, 18 January 1889.
2. The Madras Times, 20 December 1889.
3. S.C. Srinivasa Charier, op.cit., p 110.
4. The Hindu, 4 November 1889.
5. Ibid., 31 January 1890.

agitation.'[1] Such advice, often proferred in a manner to ridicule some of the cherished aspirations of the Congress, was resented in Congress circles and strained relationship with the Madras leaders. A conflict between Madava Row and the Congress leaders in Madras had become inevitable, and the Cross Bill provided the occasion for a controversy which was remarkable only for the amount of bitterness and recriminations that it generated.

The significance of this episode, however, lay in the fact that it underlined the basic tension that had always existed between the conservative and radical factions in Madras. The former, composed largely of elderly Indian politicians, as Madava Row, Gajapati Row and Seshia Sastri, and partly of the members of the ruling aristocracy, as the Maharajah of Vizianagram, had found it difficult to establish rapport with the younger and more radical groups that emerged on the political arena during the early 1880's. Indeed, in February 1885, Madava Row admitted that political 'ferment' in Madras was confined to 'the younger generation' of the educated elite and, in fact, 'to graduates of less than ten years' standing.' What these 'fiery patriots' wanted, Madava Row asserted, was 'a Parliament of B.A.'s, Native Viceroys, Native Governors, Native Lieut-Governors, Native Chief Commissioners', an aspiration with which he had no sympathy.[2] Indeed, Madava Row believed that neither the aristocracy of South India nor 'the well-off and comfortable classes' had much sympathy with such aspirations.[3] Though

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1. Ibid., 10 January 1890.

2. Cited in The Indian Mirror, 24 February 1885.

3. The Indian Mirror, 18 January 1889.

the obvious strategy for these groups would have been to hold aloof of the Congress, the decision proved to be more difficult and soul-searching, especially as public opinion was drifting strongly in the direction of reform. Hence, during the Madras Congress in 1887, many prominent members of the conservative faction succumbed to the pressure by joining the movement and even actively participating in its proceedings. However, in 1890, with Madava Row's estrangement from the Congress, the conservative faction also gradually withdrew from the tension and turmoil of the movement.

While verbal exchanges between Madava Row and certain Congress leaders continued in the local press, the Madras Standing Congress Committee decided to utilize the Easter break in early April to mount a massive political campaign against the Cross Bill in the mofussil. In part, this campaign was also meant to renew the drive to obtain signatures for a petition to Parliament and collect funds for the Congress Agency in London, for which an appeal had already been made in February 1890.[1] Eleven separate deputations, led by such prominent Madras leaders as Norton, Adam, Gantz, Ananda Charlu, Salem Ramasamy Mudaliar and S. Subramania Iyer, visited over twenty centres in the mofussil to address public meetings convened by the district Congress committees.[2] These meetings, besides flooding the Madras Standing Congress Committee with petitions, also helped to rally Congress supporters throughout the Presidency against the Cross Bill.

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1. The Madras Times, 17 February 1890.

2. For names of those undertaking this lecture tour, and the centres they were expected to visit, see The Madras Times, 3 April 1890.

On 18 April 1890, the Madras Standing Congress Committee appointed a Sub-Committee under the chairmanship of P. Somasundram Chetty 'to consider and report on Lord Cross' Indian Councils Bill.' The Sub-Committee, after studying the provisions of the Bill and the debates in the House of Lords, expressed its 'complete and emphatic disapproval of the measure.' In its view, the failure to recognize the elective principle was 'a fatal drawback' in the Bill. The reasons that were given against introducing the elective system in India failed to carry much conviction. 'It seems to be assumed', argued the Sub-Committee, 'that because all interests will not be represented by a system of election, no interest should be represented, and more, that the members of Government, aliens though they are in language, creed and thought, represent them better.' The Congress scheme, with its proposals for 'redressing inequalities of representation', was restated to dispel claims that the Congress paid 'no attention to the safeguarding of all interests.' As for the Muslim objection to the elective system, the Sub-Committee was at a loss 'to see how the Mahomedan community can be worse off under the system of election than under nomination.' If the Muslims were really opposed to election, the Sub-Committee urged that the Hindus be allowed to elect their own members at least. While anxious to demonstrate that the elective system was feasible in India, the Sub-Committee also emphasized that on this new departure depended the ability of the government to embark on social or religious legislation in the country.[1]

On the eve of Norton's departure to England on 30 April 1890, to

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1. The Madras Times, 2 May 1890.

participate in a Congress campaign for the reform of the Indian legislatures, the Madras leaders still remained firmly opposed to the Cross Bill so long as the elective principle was not recognized. Norton, in a speech prior to his departure, said that the controversy surrounding the Bill had been narrowed to one of election or nomination. Any reform unaccompanied by election, he contended, would 'simply increase the evil against which they had been protesting in the last 5 years.' He asserted that either 'the elective principle be recognised, or they must have nothing at all.' Ananda Charlu, while echoing these sentiments, appeared to be confident of the Congress ultimately securing some recognition of the elective principle. After following closely the discussion of the Cross Bill in the House of Lords, Ananda Charlu came to the conclusion that there was a general admission that the system of nomination was 'in the last degree unsatisfactory', while Lord Cross himself probably did not intend 'to exclude altogether the elective principle.' With the acceptance of Northbrook's amendment, he believed that the question at issue was 'not whether anything ought to be done more than nomination by Government' but whether 'the amendment put forward' met the aim of 'securing some sort of representation of the people.' He still believed that local and statutory bodies were 'incompetent to select men who would represent popular opinion', and preferred the scheme adopted at the Bombay Congress. In Madras, as Norton observed, the prevailing belief among the Congress leaders was that they were in the midst of 'a political crisis' and were about to enter 'the most difficult portion of their political warfare.'[1]

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1. The Hindu, 1 May 1890.

With Norton's departure, the focus of interest also shifted from India to England where the Congress sympathizers, and especially the British Committee of the Congress, were anxiously working to reach some settlement acceptable both to the Conservative Ministry and the majority of the Congress workers in India. Lord Ripon, who took an active part in this search for a compromise formula, emphasized that what had to be secured was 'a distinct recognition' of the elective principle, while the actual details of its implementation could be worked out by the Indian Government.[1] The Bradlaugh Bill, which recommended Electoral Colleges, had provoked 'hostile criticism' both in India and in England. In view of the objections of certain 'friends of reform', the British Committee decided to drop the idea of Electoral Colleges, and allow the Indian Government to devise the system of election provided that franchise was conferred on 'not less than two per cent of the inhabitants' and 'reasonable representation' allowed to the minorities.[2] The Hindu accepted the changes as an 'inevitable' compromise, and felt that the British Committee had done its utmost 'in meeting the situation without a sacrifice of any of our essential principles.' It was also confident that this 'compromise' formula would be accepted by the coming Congress session in Calcutta.[3]

Pherozeshah Mehta's presidential speech at the sixth session of the Indian National Congress in December 1890, besides reflecting a spirit of compromise, also underlined a shift in the position that the Congress

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1. Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43616, Ripon to Malabari, 28 April 1890.
2. The Hindu, 19 November 1890.
3. Ibid., 21 November 1890.

had taken a year ago. While criticizing the Cross Bill as 'a most halting and unsatisfactory measure', Mehta also conceded that the Congress scheme of 1889 had 'not proved congenial to the English political mind, averse to a new departure.' He urged the Congress to accept the suggested compromise of the British Committee, since it had 'all the elements of success in its favour' and had gathered 'round it the cautious, the carefully weighed, and responsible opinions of some of the best Viceroys we have ever had.' Moving the resolution, Lal Mohan Ghose argued that the idea of Electoral College was 'neither practicable nor a wise measure' and commended Bradlaugh for 'recasting the Bill in its present shape, so as to make it more acceptable to the press, to the people, and to the Parliament of England.' Ananda Charlu, while supporting the resolution, contended that the amended Bill gave less scope for 'destructive criticism' and surrendered 'no principle' that the Congress had enunciated in the past. The Congress accepted the compromise formula of the British Committee, and urged Parliament to pass the amended Bradlaugh Bill.[1] The way was now open for an amicable settlement, although the dictates of British politics kept the issue in public view for another eighteen months.[2]

V

The Indian Councils Act of 1892, as it emerged after the long ordeal

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1. Report of the Sixth Indian National Congress held at Calcutta, on the 26th, 27th, 29th, and 30th December, 1890, pp 7-9 & 15-6.

2. It was not until February 1892 that the amended Indian Councils Bill was introduced in the House of Lords; in the following month, it was passed by the House of Commons and in June it received royal assent. Hira Lal Singh, op.cit., p 103.

of amendments and postponements, was a conservative, if rather tentative, measure. The Congress leadership, partly on account of its anxiety to obtain a recognition of the elective principle and partly owing to exasperation at the delay and lack of sympathy of the Conservative Ministry, surrendered a substantial portion of the scheme that it had evolved in 1889. The size of the Councils, as envisaged in the Congress scheme, was drastically reduced, with the Supreme Council having ten to sixteen members and the Provincial Councils having eight to twenty members. Moreover, neither the right of demanding division on financial issues nor of asking written explanations when the veto was exercized were conceded in the Act. Even on the question of the elective principle, the Congress was denied the pleasure of having it expressly written into the provisions of the Act. The Indian Councils Act of 1892 only stipulated 'recommendation' by statutory bodies, subject to the approval of the executive, of a certain number of non-officials to represent the 'different races, classes, and interests.'[1]

In Madras, despite some obvious disappointments and a feeling of anti-climax that this prolonged debate had produced, reactions to the Act of 1892 were cautiously favourable, based partly on the belief that the Indian authorities would implement it in a spirit of liberality. The Hindu, for example, while regarding the Act as 'a very inadequate measure to meet the requirements of existing conditions', conceded that it was 'a step considerably in advance of the present arrangements' and if enforced in a 'liberal spirit' would 'make the Government more

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1. Hira Lal Singh, op.cit., pp 108-11.

economical and popular.' It was confident that the Lansdowne Government, having advocated the reform, would formulate 'liberal provisions' in implementing the measure.[1] This optimism was also shared by the Congress leadership in the country. Hume, for example, asserted that Lansdowne would make 'a genuine and strenuous attempt to secure for India's people this great boon' which Hume believed would lead the country towards 'a true system of Representative Government.'[2]

Interest at this juncture centred mainly on the rules which the Government of India would frame under the Act of 1892. In June 1892, the British Committee had urged Congress leaders to concentrate their energies on making 'the representative element real and living' by submitting proposals for the implementation of the Act.[3] The Madras Mahajana Sabha, taking advantage of Lansdowne's visit to the southern metropolis in November 1892, spelt out its ideas on this subject. It urged that twelve seats in the Madras Legislative Council be filled by election, of which two were to be apportioned to Madras City, six to the mofussil, and four to 'special interests'. It was suggested that the electorate should 'rest on some statutory basis, and that voluntary bodies, depending on personal predilection and co-option, should not be vested with the franchise.' In Madras City, all Municipal voters were to be enfranchised, while in the mofussil the right of election was to be vested in the non-official members of the local bodies. As for the provincial representative

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1. The Hindu, 2 & 29 June 1892.
2. The Bengalee, 4 June 1892.
3. The Hindu, 13 July 1892.

to the Supreme Council, the Madras Mahajana Sabha advocated his election by the non-officials in the provincial Councils.[1]

The rules that the Madras Government framed and published in April 1893, however, bore little relation to the proposals made by the Madras Mahajana Sabha. Only seven seats were set apart to be filled by 'recommendation', of which one went to the Municipal Corporation of Madras City, two to the mofussil Municipalities, two to the District Boards, one to the 'Mercantile Classes' and one to the Madras University. Although the Indian Government had suggested that the zemindary seat should also be filled by recommendation, it was turned down on the grounds that there was 'no cohesion in the only association' of zemindars in Madras. Instead, the Madras Government was to nominate a zemindar from among those paying not less than Rs 20,000 annually as rent to the government. The remaining seats were to be filled by official nomination 'in such a manner as shall secure a fair representation of the different classes of the community.'[2]

The allocation of seats and the mode of filling them, as envisaged in the rules framed by the Madras authorities, gave rise to a long and desultory controversy between the government and the various interests demanding representation. One 'special interest' that was assured of a seat in the Council was the Muslim community. During the agitation preceding the enacting of the Indian Councils Act of 1892, the Madras Muslims had generally opposed the introduction of the elective principle on the grounds that minorities would not be adequately represented, but

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1. The Madras Times, 28 November 1892.

2. IHP (Public), Vol. 4108, October 1892, No. 157, Government of Madras to Government of India, 3 September 1892.

when the rules were framed to enforce the Act Muslim thinking began to favour a system of nomination tempered by some process of consultation with the leaders of the community. Hence, when Humayun Jah Bahadur vacated his seat in November 1893 after an unbroken tenancy of over 25 years, the Muslims in the metropolis convened a meeting to recommend their choice. Wishes of the Muslims in the principal mofussil towns were ascertained and the meeting, having agreed that the Muslim member should possess 'independence of character and such educational qualifications as will enable him to take an active part in its proceedings', nominated Syed Nizamuddin Sahib, a vakil in the High Court.[1] The Madras Government, however, ignored this recommendation and selected instead Hussain Ali Khan, who possessed none of the qualities that the Muslims demanded of their member in the Council. In December 1895, the Central Mahomedan Association, contending that the recent elections to the Council had not yielded a Muslim member, demanded an additional Muslim seat to be filled after consultation with the leaders of the community, a proposal which again failed to elicit a favourable response from the Madras Government.[2]

Far more vociferous in their demands and better organized to sustain their agitation were the landed interests of the Madras Presidency. In July 1890, the Madras Landholders' Association was formed 'to watch and protect the interests and rights of the landed aristocracy' and to make 'a collective representation of the wants and grievances of landholders to Government.' The idea of a political body had been

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1. The Madras Times, 8 November 1893.

2. Ibid., 7 December 1895.

actively discussed for some years, especially as there was a growing concern that the condition of the landed aristocracy in South India was steadily deteriorating, partly owing to 'ruinous partition suits and succession suits', partly because of defective rent laws, and partly due to landlord mismanagement arising out of their neglect of western education.[1] In organizing the Madras Landholders' Association, its founders were determined to rouse all zemindars to an awareness of the problems that were threatening their continued existence, while at the same time appealing to the government to legislate against the partition of estates and reform the rent laws. To achieve the former aim, an Agent was appointed to visit the various districts in the Presidency to establish branch bodies, hold district conferences and enrol fresh members.[2] For its part, the Executive Committee of the Association submitted memorials to the government indicating the kind of legislation needed to protect the interests of the landed aristocracy.

To a body aspiring to become the spokesman of the landed interests, the decision of the Madras Government to retain the right of nominating the zemindary member caused disappointment. While welcoming the reservation of a seat in the Madras Legislative Council to represent zemindary interests, the Madras Landholders' Association wanted such representation to be 'real and substantial' and those appointed be 'competent to give their views on the subject to the benefit of the Zamindars and to the advantage of the public.' To attain this end, it was urged that the

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1. Ibid., 24 July 1890.

2. The Madras Times, 30 July 1891.

right of selection should be vested in the Association, which had a number of 'public spirited and influential Zamindars' in its ranks and might 'fairly be taken as representing the Zamindars of Southern India.'[1] The Madras Government was not convinced by this claim and rejected the demand, contending that such a concession would not 'secure a Fair Representation' and would only result 'in excluding from the Council such zamindars as may not have seen fit to join your Association.'[2]

The Madras Landholders' Association, however, was not easily silenced by this official rebuff. Resenting the imputation that it was not fully representative of the zemindars, the Association in a further memorial in August 1893 asserted that it represented 'by far the greater portion of the landed aristocracy in the Presidency', including 'more than 80 per cent of the landholders paying R 20,000 or more as peshkash.' The Association also put forward a new demand. Claiming that zemindary interests were 'so large and varied' and they contributed 'so largely to the finances of the State', the Association demanded a second zemindary seat in the Madras Legislative Council. The example of Bombay was cited, where two of the eight seats were reserved to landholders, although their 'resources, position and importance' were inferior to those of their counterparts in Madras.[3] The Madras Government remained obdurate, compelling the Association as a final resort to appeal to the Viceroy,[4]

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1. IHP (Public), Vol. 4550, April 1894, No. 195, Memorial of Madras Landholders' Association to Government of Madras, 14 June 1893.

2. Ibid., No. 197, Government of Madras to Madras Landholders Association, 28 June 1893.

3. IHP (Public), Vol. 4550, April 1894, No. 196, Memorial of the Madras Landholders' Association to the Government of Madras, 22 August 1893.

4. Ibid., No. 187, Memorial of the Madras Landholders' Association to Elgin, 3 February 1894.

but again without any success.

Demands for modification of the rules framed by the Madras Government also emanated from other quarters. The Madras Mahajana Sabha, while expressing its gratitude at the 'liberal and sympathetic spirit' in which the Act of 1892 had been implemented,[1] was unhappy over the weak representation of the mofussil. In a memorial to the Madras authorities, the Sabha called for two additional seats to be thrown open for election by the local bodies in the mofussil, thereby increasing the latter's representation to six. At the same time, it urged for the re-distribution of these seats to secure a more complete representation of the mofussil. The existing system of grouping Municipalities and Local Boards separately for purposes of election, designed to balance urban and rural interests, came under criticism. Instead the Madras Mahajana Sabha advocated the division of the mofussil into six electoral divisions, having regard to 'the linguistic and ethnological peculiarities of the Presidency.' The Madras Government rejected the suggestion, contending that the 'fundamental principle' governing the Act of 1892 was 'class as opposed to territorial representation.'[2]

Far more important, especially from the viewpoint of shaping official policy, were the powers granted to the reformed Councils. Ever since the reform of the Indian legislatures became the main plank in the Congress platform, it was believed that a reformed Council would check official high-handedness, have a salutary effect on taxation and expenditure, and even halt hasty and ill-conceived legislation. Although the Act of 1892

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1. The Madras Times, 28 November 1895.

2. The Hindu, 18 September 1897.

only conferred limited powers to the non-officials, there was optimism in Madras that they were adequate, if fully and wisely used, to realize many of the hopes that the Congress leaders had entertained in the past. However, within a few years of the operation of the measure, there were complaints from certain Madras leaders that the officials were frustrating the just concessions of Parliament. In part, the complaints sprang over the way in which the privilege of interpellation was worked. C. Vijiaraghava Chariar, after serving four years in the Madras Legislative Council, complained that the answers given to questions were 'short and evasive and not infrequently calculated to snub the questioning Member.' Embarrassing questions, he claimed, were 'invariably disallowed under certain technical rules.'[1] The budget discussion was another theme of complaint. Ananda Charlu, after his experience in the Supreme Legislative Council, lamented that the budget was laid 'in its finally concocted form' at the close of the Council session, thus reducing the debate to 'a mere farce.'[2]

Despite these protests and lamentations, there was a general recognition in Madras that the experiment of 1892 was on the whole 'a remarkable success.' The system of 'recommendation' led to the infusion of 'independent persons actually representing the people in the Councils of the Empire', competent to act as 'valuable helpmates' of the government as well as a 'salutary influence on the course of legislation.'[3] Elected members, more than attempting to remove popular grievances, tried

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1. The Madras Mail, 12 May 1900.
2. Ananda Charlu, Letters on Indian Politics, pp ii-iv.
3. The Madras Mail, 26 October 1899.

'in various ways to lay the foundation for greater powers and further expansion' of the legislatures. Believing that elective Councils were 'a tender plant which should be watched and taken care of by the best intellects', there was anxiety that those elected to these bodies should be 'above suspicion in their conduct towards Government and the people' and refrain from any action which would 'weaken the bonds of union between the rulers and the ruled.'[1] Hence, much of the energies of the Indian members in the Madras legislature were directed towards ensuring the success of the experiment embarked in 1892, for on the outcome of this experiment depended the fate of any future demand for a fresh instalment of constitutional reform.

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1. Ibid., 27 August 1897.

Chapter VI

Reform and Revivalism in Madras

The last two decades of the nineteenth century were as much an era of social reformist activity as of political change in India. In Madras, as indeed elsewhere in the country, the 1880's witnessed the germination of the seeds of social reform after a long period of gestation. Reformist organizations sprang up in the various centres of the Presidency to translate dogma into practical action, and in December 1885 a conference of social reformers in South India was convened in Madras City to evolve a more coherent programme and agree on the methods of propagating the reformist cause. Two years later, when Madras played host to the Congress, the National Social Conference was launched in response to the demand of reformist leaders in the country who wished to subject their 'religious institutions and ideas' to the influence of 'a wide and cosmopolitan organisation in harmony with their fresh-born spirit of national regeneration.'[1] The passing of the Age of Consent Bill in March 1891 was the first major achievement of this phase of reformist agitation and, as in the instance of the Cross Bill, it gave birth to a bitter controversy in South India among the Congress leaders and between the reformers and the orthodox.

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Although differences between the reformers and the orthodox were brought into sharp focus during the debate on the Age of Consent Bill, it must be emphasized that this conflict between the two opposing groups

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1. The Hindu, 24 June 1887.

had been a recurrent feature in Madras ever since social reformist agitation found an organized outlet during the early 1850's. While the Madras Native Association was launching an appeal for political concessions, a small band of social reformers were focusing their thoughts on the evils afflicting Hindu society. In November 1852, they organized the Madras Hindu Progressive Improvement Society with the avowed aim of eradicating certain social evils which were 'not obviously sanctioned by the Shastras.'[1] Female education was the main pivot of their programme, and it was to be attained by a simultaneous assault on three separate fronts: female education, prohibition of child marriage, and widow remarriage. Believing that female education would not make much headway under missionary auspices, especially among the higher castes, the social reformers established caste girls schools in the metropolis. Education was expected to develop 'the moral and intellectual powers' of Hindu women, remove antiquated beliefs and prejudices, and raise a new generation of mothers sympathetic to the cause of social reform. Widow remarriage, however, was the boldest and most controversial plank in the reformist platform. As early as 1840, R. Venkata Row, Dewan of Travancore and father of Raghunatha Row, had consulted leading pundits on the propriety of widow remarriages. They published a work demonstrating that the Shastras did not prohibit this practice,[2] and this encouraged M. Venkataroylu Naidu to advocate widow remarriage. During the early 1850's, a signature campaign was started in Bangalore by

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1. The Athenaeum, 20 November 1852.

2. The Madras Mail, 10 December 1901.

'liberal' Brahmans in support of widow remarriage,[1] but it was with the formation of the Madras Hindu Progressive Improvement Society that a concerted attempt was made towards educating public opinion by holding periodic lectures and distributing pamphlets. Also embodied in the programme of the Madras Hindu Progressive Improvement Society was the advancement of 'the humbler classes' in Hindu society. Convinced that education would 'emancipate them from the trammels of ignorance and vice', a preparatory school was opened in the metropolis to impart instruction 'in an unostentatious way.' Within a year over 250 pupils were enrolled, but the efforts of the social reformers were severely hampered by the lack of funds, as neither the state nor the wealthy Hindus showed any willingness to lend a helping hand.[2]

The champions of Hindu orthodoxy made no secret of their hostility of the idea of social reform. Fearful that the reformers were aiming 'a blow at the every fabric of Hindooism', the orthodox attempted to close all avenues of financial and moral support to the reformist cause. Public lectures on social reform were boycotted,[3] while efforts by the Madras Hindu Progressive Improvement Society to enlist support for a petition welcoming the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act in 1856 were frustrated. The Brahman priests consulted expressed opposition to the Act, contending that it was an unwarranted interference with Hindu usages.[4] At times, the opposition of the orthodox assumed a more violent character. In

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1. Mullens, op.cit., p 37.

2. The Spectator, 17 January 1853.

3. Ibid., 21 December 1855.

4. Ibid., 29 December 1856.

November 1856, for example, the parties involved in a widow remarriage in Salem were threatened with violence and excommunication.[1] In a highly conservative Hindu society in Madras, still largely untouched by the effects of western education, the reformist cause generated hardly any popular sympathy. Hence, when some of the more prominent leaders died during the early 'sixties, the Madras Hindu Progressive Improvement Society lost its initial impetus and lapsed into a state of inactivity.

That the climate of opinion in Madras was hostile to social reform was confirmed by the experience of Keshub Chandra Sen. Sanguine of extending the doctrines of the Brahma Samaj outside Bengal, Sen visited Madras City in February 1864 in the course of a lecture tour of southern and western India. He found the people of Madras 'an extremely bigoted race in spite of their intellectual enlightenment', with educated Hindus observing 'absurd usages and customs', while caste distinctions prevailed to 'a more fearful extent than in Bengal.' In social reform, Sen felt that Madras was 'lamentably backward', with the widow remarriage movement being 'nipped in the bud.' When he began to canvass support for a branch of the Brahma Samaj, he was unable to enlist much active sympathy and left Madras lamenting that the southern metropolis was still 'not ripe enough for those grand movements which the Brahmo Somoj is developing in Bengal.'[2]

Keshub Chandra Sen, however, was more hopeful of the future of the reformist movement in Madras. His lecture had been well received by

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1. Ibid., 13 November 1856.

2. K.C. Sen, Diary in Madras and Bombay. From 9th February to 8th April 1864, (Calcutta, 1887), passim.

the educated Hindus, and some even expressed their willingness to help him in his mission. Lakshmanarasu Chetty was among those 'deeply touched' by Sen's plea, expressed his readiness to assist in 'any movement for the social improvement of the natives', and wanted a missionary from Bengal to be stationed in Madras to 'keep the machine in a working order.' P. Ramanjulu Naidu, a translator in the Madras High Court, showed a willingness to promote widow remarriage and asked for pamphlets on the subject from Bengal. From such sentiments, Sen was able to form a more hopeful view of the future prospects of social reform in the southern metropolis.[1]

Indeed, Sen's hopes were realized sooner than he might have anticipated, for in May 1864 the Veda Samaj was formally launched in Madras by a small group of Hindu reformers. V. Rajagopala Charlu, a graduate in law and a brother of Sadagopah Charlu, was the main architect in its formation and was also its first President. In P. Subbrayulu Chetty, a fellow-graduate, he found an able auxilliary who was persuaded to become Secretary of the Veda Samaj. About a dozen Hindus, mostly graduates, signed a covenant pledging to work towards the cause of Theism and worship of 'the Supreme God.' They also vowed to 'discard all sectarian views and animosities', and encourage female education, adult marriage and widow remarriage.[2] A monthly Tamil periodical, called the Tatwa Bodini (True Doctrine), was started to propagate Theistic beliefs and discourage all forms of idolatry. Efforts were also made to extend the

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1. K.C. Sen, op.cit., passim.

2. The covenant is reproduced in The Athenaeum and Daily News, 14 November 1865.

work of the Veda Samaj to the mofussil, and branches were established in Tanjore, Salem and Pudukottai.[1]

As a reformist force in Madras, the Veda Samaj achieved less than it initially promised. In part, its failure lay in its radical programme. Instead of exploiting the line of least resistance, the Veda Samaj confronted a conservative Hindu community with a programme that threatened to undermine the very fabric of Hindu society. The denunciation of idolatry and caste, encouragement of widow remarriage, and even the adoption of a new mode of dress, alienated the Samajists in Madras from the mass of the Hindus. With the passage of time, this estrangement deepened and, far from being reformers of Hindu society, the Samajists began to assume the character of a distinct sect, possessing their own forms of worship and even claiming in 1871 legal recognition of their marriages.[2] The failure of the Veda Samaj could also be attributed to the contradictions inherent in its dogma. It regarded the Vedas as infallible, despite the doubts that had long been cast in Bengal. However, in 1871, this was belatedly rectified when the Samaj assumed a new name, the Southern India Brahma Samaj, 'in order to remove the impression formed in the public mind that the Brahmos believe in the Vedas alone as the infallible guide to their salvation.'[3] There were also contradictions in the behaviour of the Samajists. While the covenant denounced caste and idolatry, members signing it were enjoined to

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1. The Madras Times, 2 March 1867.
2. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 28 November 1871.
3. The Theistic Quarterly Review, No. VI & VII, p 124.

observe certain Hindu ceremonies 'as mere matters of routine' lest their action cause offence to the community. The 'stern opposition' of the orthodox also added to the problems of the Samajists. There were the usual vexations from Hindu officials, while in some places societies were organized to counteract the activities of the Samajists.[1] Moreover, the movement suffered in consequence of the premature death of its founders: both Rajagopala Charlu and Subbrayulu Chetty died in 1867, and this reduced the Veda Samaj to a dormant state for many years. The early 'seventies were a period of revival, largely owing to the efforts of K. Sreedharulu Naidu, but his premature death saw the Samaj again relapsing into inactivity. In 1881, when the movement was undergoing another period of revival, it had 40 active members and 60 sympathizers, with some languishing branches in the mofussil.[2]

Unlike the Samajists, a more modest attempt in social reform was made by a group of Hindu reformers under the leadership of C.V. Runganada Sastri. A Sanskrit scholar of repute, and coming from a respected Brahman family, Runganada Sastri's crusade was mainly directed against the practice of infant marriage. In South India, infant marriage was universal among the Brahmans and, to a lesser extent, among Komatis and Vellalars. These caste groups, under threat of excommunication, married their girls before puberty, invariably before they had attained the age of eleven. Part of the objection to infant marriage stemmed from the belief that it created 'an unnecessarily premature temptation

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1. The Madras Times, 5 July 1869.

2. The Theistic Quarterly Review, No. VI & VII, p 124.

for sexual pleasure.' Another objection was that it affected the health of the progeny, resulting in 'a weak and imbecile nation.' However, the main reformist objection to this practice was that it produced 'an unusually large number of infant widows.' The high incidence of death among young children and the strict prohibition of widow remarriage condemned many young girls, on the death of their husbands, to a life of enforced widowhood.[1] These widows, doomed to a life of celibacy, also suffered from disabilities imposed on them by Hindu custom: 'Privation of food, of clothing, and even of necessary comforts; observance of fasts, which at times extend to seventy-two hours, enforced absence from every scene of festivity.'[2] Reformist conscience was not solely moved by the plight of these young widows. There was concern that the rigours of enforced widowhood had introduced 'a flood of immorality' into Hindu society. Widows were often suspected of leading a life of laxity and vice, and even resorting to infanticide to dispose of illegitimate children.[3]

Runganada Sastri had been aware for some time of 'the complete injustice and barbarism of infantine [sic] marriages', but it was not until July 1865 that he decided to launch a campaign against the practice. Conscious of the innate Hindu hostility towards any change of their social or religious habits, and wiser from the experience of past

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1. MPP, Vol. 2595, September 1885, No. 2249, M. Thillianayagam Pillay to Government of Madras, 15 January 1885.

2. Ragoonath Row, A Review of the progress of knowledge of Hindu Law and Custom during the past hundred years, (Madras, 1885), pp 16-9.

3. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 29 September 1865.

reformers, Runganada Sastri saw the necessity to base his plea for change on the authority of the ancient Hindu writings. Aided by a Sanskrit scholar, Anandarama Sastri, he adduced evidence to show that infant marriage was 'contrary to the very sentiments and doctrines expressly promulgated in the sacred books on which our marriage rites are founded.'[1] A pamphlet was produced for circulation, especially among learned Sanskrit scholars, and it was then discussed in the presence of the Head Priest of Madras City.[2]

The claims of the reformers were challenged by G. Venkanna Sastri, a Telugu scholar, who championed the cause of infant marriage. He questioned the validity of the reformist case, contending that the latter had referred to 'the wrong source of evidence in support of their cause' and consequently had arrived at 'a most extraordinary illogical conclusion with respect to the meaning of the passages' they had cited.[3] Venkanna Sastri declared his intention to present his case in a pamphlet, and persuaded the Head Priest to defer decision on the matter until his pamphlet was ready. Almost two months elapsed before the pamphlet was published, though in the meanwhile Venkanna Sastri kept alive the controversy by his frequent contributions to the local press.

However, when the long-awaited confrontation between the rival factions took place in October 1865, it proved to be a virtual fiasco. What occurred at the meeting is not clear, although each party blamed the other for failing to reach an amicable settlement. The reformers

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1. The Madras Times, 13 July 1865.

2. Ibid., 3 August 1865.

3. D. Narasiah, Letters on Hindu Marriages, (Madras, 1867), p 11.

claimed that the meeting collapsed because of the insistence of their opponents to refer the dispute to certain Sanskrit scholars chosen by the orthodox party. Venkanna Sastri was also accused of making 'malicious and most uncalled for observations' against his opponents, and of withholding his pamphlet from the reformers.[1] The orthodox party, for its part, accused the reformers of not abiding by their earlier undertaking, viz. to refer the dispute to 'a Committee of eminent learned men' selected from the various parts of the Presidency.[2] This abortive encounter ended, at least temporarily, the reformist agitation against infant marriage. The efforts of Runganada Sastri and his co-adjutors had been defeated, partly by the confusion that the interpretations of the ancient texts had created in the Hindu mind and partly by the dilatory tactics of the orthodox party.

While the reformers were waging a losing battle against the practice of infant marriage, interest was again revived in Madras on the issue of female education. Much of the Hindu opposition to female education had disappeared during the 1850's, but its growth was severely hampered by the premature withdrawal of high caste girls from schools. This early withdrawal stemmed partly from the practice of infant marriage and partly from parental objection to their daughters being taught by male teachers after a certain age. Reformers recognized the weight of the latter objection, but it was not until the arrival of Mary Carpenter in November 1866 that a way was found to surmount this difficulty.

Mary Carpenter, whose acquaintance with Ram Mohan Roy had roused

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1. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 4 & 9 October 1865.

2. The Madras Times, 6 October 1865.

her 'ardent interest in the regeneration of India', visited India in the hope of mobilizing support for the cause of female education. On her arrival in Madras City, a meeting of Hindu leaders, among whom were Runganada Sastri and Rajagopala Charlu, was held under the auspices of the Director of Public Instruction, and it was agreed that a Female Normal School was 'absolutely necessary' to halt the premature withdrawal of girls from schools. When the proposal was discussed at a public meeting in January 1867, opinion was divided as to what ought to be the language of instruction and whether admission be open to all classes. Mary Carpenter, who was away in Calcutta, convened a fresh meeting on her return and secured support for a memorial calling the Madras Government to establish a Female Normal School.[1]

The Indian authorities gave a cautious welcome to the proposal, and were willing to implement it provided part of the maintenance costs were met by private sources.[2] The initial response to the appeal for funds was disappointing, and one reformer complained in December 1867 that the scheme was falling through 'between the apathy of the applicants on the one hand and stintfulness of the Government on the other.'[3] However, the Maharajah of Vizianagram came to the rescue of the reformers by offering to subscribe Rs 12,000 annually towards the cost of the Female Normal School.[4] Satisfied that private contributions were adequate, the Director of Public Instruction started discussions with the

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1. M. Carpenter, Six Months in India, I, (London, 1868), pp 149 & 277-9.
2. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 6 September 1867.
3. The Madras Times, 20 December 1867.
4. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 7 March 1868.

Hindu leaders to iron out certain problems connected with the project. One contentious issue was that of admission and the Madras Government, with some reluctance, agreed that admission be limited to the higher castes. The Female Normal School, launched in 1869, did not realize the expectations of the reformers. With attendance remaining low, the Madras Government decided in 1873 to throw open the institution to girls of 'all classes and sects, provided that they belong to the families of respectable social status.'[1]

Besides infant marriage and female education, the other reformist issue which attracted attention was widow remarriage. Reformers in Madras, having failed in their campaign against infant marriage, were quick to point out the urgency to sanction widow remarriage to relieve the plight of child widows. Despite the desultory discussion in the press, reformers registered little advance during the 'sixties. Indeed, it was the example of the reformers in the neighbouring Indian States that ultimately compelled those in Madras to take some concerted action. In 1867, a Brahman widow remarriage took place in Bangalore, thereby demonstrating the ability of a small group of reformers 'to reduce the theory to practice' and have 'the moral courage to face the public opposition.'[2] However, the reaction was far more hostile when a widow remarriage was celebrated in Travancore in March 1873. Seshia Iyengar, a Brahman pleader in Nagercoil, encouraged by the example of reformers in North India and fortified by the support of some of his

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1. Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1873-74, (Madras, 1875), p 80.

2. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 29 June 1867.

friends, decided to marry his young widowed daughter according to Hindu rites. Fearing trouble, he sought police protection, but this did not deter his tormentors from creating a disturbance at the wedding in which he 'narrowly escaped from being killed.' After the marriage, persecutions began: Seshia Iyengar and his family were excommunicated, forbidden from places of worship, and deserted by relatives and friends.[1] To withstand such social pressures, he announced in September 1873 the formation of a widow remarriage society to offer financial help and advice to parties arranging widow remarriages.[2]

In Madras City, there was a recrudescence of activity among the reformers and it resulted in the formation of the Widow Marriage Association in April 1874. Its aim (defined cautiously so as not to offend the orthodox) was to encourage 'the marriage of Hindoo widows to the extent of its means and opportunities and so far as may be compatible with the preservation of the hold on and their influence in orthodox Hindoo society.' Realising that the success of their cause depended largely on having a religious sanction, the reformers decided to publish relevant extracts from the Shastras which expressly sanctioned widow remarriage. On the other hand, any ideas about promoting inter-caste marriages or undermining the caste system were vigorously disclaimed.[3] Despite their modest aims, and in spite of their extreme anxiety not to provoke the opposition of the orthodox, the reformers failed to reap any practical results from this venture, and the Hindu Widow Marriage

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1. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 19 May 1873.
2. Ibid., 7 October 1873.
3. Ibid., 3 June 1874.

Association retreated into obscurity soon after its formation.

The collapse of the widow remarriage movement in 1874 brought to a close the first phase of reformist activity in South India, a phase in which the reformers could boast of few triumphs and were either outwitted by the champions of orthodoxy or frustrated by the dead weight of Hindu conservatism. On almost every front where a campaign had been started, the reformers were forced to retreat by their opponents and were reduced to a position of isolation and general ineffectiveness. However, despite these setbacks, the significance of this early phase of reformist activity cannot be over-estimated, especially in formulating a programme of reform and in acquainting public opinion of the evils afflicting Hindu society. It was, in effect, a period of exploratory activity with the reformers probing into the underlying weaknesses in the social system and evolving acceptable and effective methods of removing them. The reformist triumphs of the latter decades, to some measure, should be attributed to the contributions of these early reformers.

II

A weakness which contemporary observers discerned in the early reformist movement was the reluctance of its supporters to act according to their convictions. It was often asserted that educated Hindus lacked the 'moral courage' to set an example within their family in a cause which they boldly advocated on the platform and in the press. Indeed, in moments of decision, reformers were charged of deserting the cause in fear of the opposition of the orthodox and the pressures of the family. In the words of a Hindu writer in 1878, the educated Hindu was 'an

incoherent combination of two opposing elements', in whom 'reason and sentiment, theory and practice, conviction and action are always at war with each other.'[1] If the reformist movement was to make any substantial advance henceforth, Madras needed reformers who had the courage of their convictions and were willing to stake their comforts and reputation for conscience and humanity. Such a reformer was K. Viresalingam Pantalu.

Born in 1848 into a Niyogi Brahman family, Viresalingam's pioneering efforts in promoting widow remarriages in the 'comparatively obscure town' of Rajahmundry represented the most significant break-through yet in the field of social reform in South India. He possessed the qualities demanded of a reformer, viz. courage, a sense of dedication to the cause, and an intimate knowledge of Sanskrit, Telugu and ancient Hindu writings. His mastery of Telugu enabled him to wield his pen with eloquence and persuasion, whether in writing pamphlets on social reform or editing the Vivekavardani, a weekly Telugu newspaper that he had started in 1874 largely 'to create a healthy public opinion' in which reformist activity could take place. As a Telugu Pundit in Rajahmundry College, he found an opportunity to advocate social reform among the rising generation. In 1879, Viresalingam embarked on lecture tours, combing effectively the Telugu districts, and exhorting his audience to co-operate in the task of eradicating social evils.[2] Much of his campaign was directed against the familiar social evils, but it was the

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1. The Madras Times, 12 November 1878.

2. J. Gurunadhan, Viresalingam. The Founder of Telugu Public Life, (Rajahmundry, 1911), pp 29-31.

plight of the young Hindu widow that deeply stirred his sympathy.[1]

Viresalingam, however, recognized that mere exhortation through the press and the platform was in itself inadequate to achieve his reformist objectives. An organization, with defined aims and a ready source of funds, was an essential auxilliary, especially in a cause generally unpopular with large sections of the community. Hence, the Rajahmundry Social Reform Association was launched in 1878, under the auspices of a small band of active reformers. Though many subscribed liberally to its funds, the principal contributor was P. Ramakrishnaiya Chetty of Cocanada who contributed Rs 10,000.[2] It was apparent from the beginning that the interest of the reformers would be chiefly focused on the question of widow remarriage. Viresalingam, following the precedent of earlier reformers, first attempted to convince Hindu opinion that there was no religious objection to the remarriage of widows whose husbands had died before consummation. A memorandum was prepared to prove his case, quoting liberally from the ancient religious texts, and it was circulated widely in the Telugu districts.[3] By the early months of 1881, the reformers had stirred up a heated controversy in Rajahmundry over this issue, though outnumbered by the forces of orthodoxy. In March 1881, when the Head Priest of the Telugu districts visited the town, the reformers convened a meeting to resolve the issue. The meeting proved inconclusive,[4] but the reformers decided to proceed with

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1. The Madras Times, 1 January 1885.
2. The Madras Times, 15 June 1885.
3. J. Gurunadhan, op.cit., pp 93-9.
4. The Madras Times, 24 April 1883.

their plans and in December 1881 performed two widow remarriages according to Hindu rites. The event caused a 'great excitement' in Rajahmundry, and a police escort had to be called out during the marriage procession for fear of disturbance.[1]

The hostility of the orthodox did not take long to manifest itself. Shortly after the event, a public meeting was held by the orthodox party and it was resolved to petition the High Priest of the Smartha sect requesting instructions as to how the Hindu public should conduct itself towards those who had participated in the widow remarriages. In his reply, the High Priest, while ruling that widow remarriage was 'contrary to ancient and long established custom', declared the participants in the widow remarriages as excommunicated, some permanently and others temporarily until they had submitted to 'the penance prescribed as an atonement.'[2] The decree of excommunication, which affected about 30 families, was read out in public and the Hindus were warned against associating with the families on pain of excommunication. This was the signal for a massive persecution of the reformers: houses on rent were taken away, wells closed, temples declared out of bounds, priests, barbars and washermen fled, and friends and relatives deserted them.[3] Unable to withstand this persecution, many of the excommunicated families agreed to undergo penance for readmission into caste. Viresalingam and a few close associates, however, remained defiant and unrepentent, and instead instituted charges against the High Priest for depriving them of

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1. Ibid., 1 January 1885.
2. The Madras Times, 24 April 1883.
3. Ibid., 6 February 1882.

their civil rights by issuing the decree of excommunication.

When the case came before the Joint Magistrate of Rajahmundry in January 1882, the High Priest was acquitted on all charges on the grounds that he had acted 'in good faith, and without malice.' Viresalingham appealed to the High Court, which convicted the High Priest on one count, viz. for resorting to a post-card to convey his message of excommunication to Viresalingam, thereby exceeding 'the privilege intended by the law', and fined him Rs 200.[1] The High Court, however, refused to pronounce an opinion on the issue of restoring the caste privileges which, in effect, constituted the main burden of the reformist complaint, arguing that such questions lay outside the purview of the court.[2] Despite the conviction of the High Priest, the High Court ruling only strengthened the hands of the orthodox party by leaving unchallenged the right to exercise the power of excommunication. The reformers, largely due to Viresalingam's determination, continued in their efforts to promote widow remarriages. By June 1884, when the Rajahmundry Widow Remarriage Association was organized to infuse new vitality into the movement, ten widow remarriages had been celebrated under the auspices of Viresalingam, who deservedly earned the title of 'the Apostle of Widow Marriage' in South India.[3]

With Rajahmundry blazing the trail of reform, the demand for some form of similar reformist organization in Madras City began to be increasingly heard. In Raghunatha Row, the reformers in the metropolis

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1. Ibid., 24 April 1883.

2. Ibid., 27 April 1883.

3. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, April 1883, p 5.

found an inspiring and widely-respected leader, deeply versed in the ancient Hindu writings and 'endowed with a large measure of common sense, tact and judgement.'[1] For many years, he had believed that social reform would follow in the wake of western education, but by the early 'eighties he placed little faith in this belief and, indeed, came to feel that western education 'had made it impossible to secure from our contemporaries any reform however good and true it may be.'[2] In short, Raghunatha Row recognized the need for an organized campaign to expose the evils of Hindu society, and by the early months of 1882 he had gathered around him a small nucleus of reformers to enable him to launch the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association.

The emergence of Raghunatha Row as the reformist leader in the metropolis was in no small measure due to his patient study of ancient Hindu laws and religion. His researches convinced him that many of the prevalent evils in Hindu society were due to a departure from the old rules of behaviour, brought about by centuries of chaos and decay when an ignorant clergy and 'sinister' textual commentators imported into Hindu society customs and rules 'prejudicial to the happiness of the people.' It was in the treatment of women that he found the greatest departure from ancient practice. Although the Shastras had placed women in a position of equality with men 'in their enjoyment of their civil rights', Raghunatha Row asserted that in recent periods they had

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1. The Madras Standard, 27 October 1885.

2. R. Raghunath Rao, A Lecture on the Marriage of the Hindoos, (Indore, 1887), p 2.

been 'deprived of all their privileges.'[1] The Shastras, in his view, neither sanctioned infant marriage nor prohibited widow remarriage. On the contrary, the Shastras laid the minimum age of marriage for girls at ten, and even encouraged post-puberty marriages. Widow remarriage was also allowed, under certain restrictions, although the Shastras drew a distinction between virgin and other widows.[2] Raghunatha Row, a strong advocate of virgin widow remarriage, argued that according to Hindu law a marriage was 'not complete until cohabitation took place.' Hence, he wanted virgin widow remarriage to be accorded the status of a first marriage and be performed with Hindu rites.[3]

Within the reformist movement, Raghunatha Row belonged to what was known as the 'traditional school' of reformers, a group which subscribed to the belief that the Shastras, being the divinely inspired writings of the Hindus, should be the sole determinant of Hindu social and religious behaviour. Unlike the 'rationalist school' of reformers, who wanted reason and humanity to be the guidelines of reform, Raghunatha Row called for 'an inflexible conformity with the Shastras' in the pursuit of reformist goals.[4] At times, he even rejected the term 're-form' in preference to what he called 'the revival of our old rules of conduct.' This attitude stemmed partly from reasons of expediency. He did not believe that reform could be achieved by 'proclaiming ourselves to be clever men and calling upon others to obey us.' The success of

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1. The Madras Times, 7 August 1885.
2. R. Ragoonatha Row, Hindu Law on Marriage, (Madras, 1882), pp 11-4.
3. The Madras Times, 21 September 1882.
4. Ibid., 11 February 1885.

a reform, he felt, depended on 'preaching to the people that the practice is not only pernicious but is opposed to their Shastras.'[1] If the 'traditional school' looked to the past for its guidance, the 'rationalist school' was clearly inspired by modernist European thinking and wanted to base its cause on reason and social justice. But in the situation of the 'eighties, the 'traditional school' saw the advantages of moving cautiously and even abiding by 'the authority of the Shastras.' Hence, it conceded the leadership to the 'traditional school', which largely consisted of the elder group of reformers - Raghunatha Row, P. Chentsal Row, S. Subramania Iyer and T. Muthusamy Iyer.

The aims and early activities of the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association largely mirrored the thinking of the 'traditional school' of reformers. The Association disapproved of infant marriages, where the bride was below ten years of age, but its main aim was to promote widow remarriages. Marriage, according to the Association's rules, was only 'completed by sacrifices and by consummation', and widow remarriages 'with Vedic marital rites' were permissible 'provided she is a virgin.'[2] The Association pledged 'to advocate and encourage, celebrate and pay for, the marriages of girls who are or who may be widowed before the consummation of marriage with their husbands, and to receive them, their supporters and sympathisers into society.'[3] The Association was to admit ordinary members on payment of an annual subscription of Rs 6; pundits and priests were to be welcomed as honorary members; while

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1. R. Raghunath Rao, A Lecture on the Marriage of the Hindoos, pp 8-9.
2. The Madras Times, 7 January 1885.
3. Ibid., 25 February 1882.

active reformers in the mofussil, as Viresalingam, were to be admitted as 'sympathisers.'[1] The most important positions within the Association were filled by the reformers of the 'traditional school', with Raghunatha Row elected President.

At a meeting held in March 1883, the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association decided on the details of the campaign that it should wage to promote widow remarriages. It was agreed that the leaders of the body, including the President, should undertake lecture tours to the various centres in the mofussil to explain in the regional languages the Hindu marriage laws as enjoined in the Shastras. At the same time, pamphlets on the subject were to be freely distributed, including the rules of the Association and Raghunatha Row's Hindu Law on Marriage. The Association also decided to offer monetary incentives to those who negotiated virgin widow remarriages or provided information of virgin widows wishing to get married. Money was also to be set apart to celebrate widow remarriages, as well as meet the financial and other needs of such couples.[2] Moreover, steps were to be taken to forge closer links with the reformist bodies in the mofussil. In June 1883, for example, Viresalingam was invited by the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association to perform a widow remarriage in the metropolis. The occasion was celebrated on a lavish scale, culminating in a procession through Mylapore.[3]

Meanwhile, the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 came under

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1. The Madras Mail, 2 March 1882.
2. The Madras Times, 9 March 1883.
3. Ibid., 11 June 1883.

criticism from the reformers. At a meeting in May 1883, the idea of seeking a modification of the Act was discussed by the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association, and it was agreed that a Draft Bill be prepared for submission to the Indian Government. In forwarding the Bill in June 1883, the Association asserted that the aims of the Act of 1856 had 'not been largely realised owing to the character of certain provisions.' It complained that as inheritance was forfeited on remarriage, many child widows were kept in a state of enforced widowhood by parents in order to retain the inheritance. The Draft Bill wanted this disability removed in the case of virgin widows, and thereby encourage remarriage which was 'in accordance with Hindu Law.' The Draft Act also demanded the disinheritance of widows guilty of adultery, as it believed that such a provision would check women leading 'a disgraceful, sinful and criminal life.' In calling for urgent legislation, the Association expressed its readiness to have the Draft Bill scrutinized by 'a Commission of Hindus and Europeans, both official and non-official, old and new Sanskrit Pundits' so as to ensure that it conformed to Hindu law.[1]

With the reformist cause gaining momentum in Madras City, the forces of orthodoxy were roused into taking some counter-measures to stem the tide. In June 1882, a large meeting of the orthodox party was held in a temple to discuss the question of widow remarriage. Two pundits, citing passages from the ancient Hindu texts, demonstrated that widow remarriages were never sanctioned.[2] The formation of the Madras

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1. The Madras Times, 6 July 1883.

2. Ibid., 21 June 1882.

Hindu Sabha in 1882 provided the orthodox party with an organization to resist the demands of the reformers. At a meeting in September 1882, the Madras Hindu Sabha decided to raise funds to publish and distribute pamphlets opposing widow remarriage.[1] A pamphlet was prepared under the Sabha's auspices to demonstrate that Raghunatha Row's Hindu Law on Marriage was 'not a legitimate explication of the law on the subject; [and] that the Hindu law sanctions only one husband to a woman.'[2] The threat of excommunication, the strongest weapon of the orthodox, was ultimately resorted to in June 1883 when six reformers who attended a dinner during a widow remarriage were excommunicated.

The propaganda war between the orthodox and the reformers continued uninterrupted till September 1884 when an attempt was made to settle the issue amicably at a conference. The initiative to end the controversy came from the Head Priest of Triplicane who, after a discussion with Raghunatha Row, decided to convene a conference to decide whether the Shastras sanctioned widow remarriage.[3] The meeting, attended by representatives of both sides and about 200 pundits, proved to be a repetition of what happened on a similar occasion in 1865. The bone of contention was the question of assessors. Almost two days were spent in trying to settle this difficulty, but the insistence of the Head Priest to act as the sole arbiter led to the collapse of the conference.[4] The reformers, not unduly discouraged by the outcome of the conference,

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1. The Madras Mail, 19 September 1882.

2. M. Srinivasa Charyar and K. Subbarow, A Review of Dewan Bahadur R. Ragunatha Row's Hindu Law on Marriage, (Madras, 1883), pp 4-5.

3. Ibid., 27 August 1884.

4. Ibid., 5 & 9 September 1884.

continued to seek new ways to popularize their cause.

The announcement that the Conference of the Madras Mahajana Sabha would assemble in Madras City in December 1884 was seized upon by the reformers to convene a Widow Remarriage Conference at the same time. Convinced that 'periodical exchange of thoughts and ideas is absolutely necessary to create a public opinion', the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association drafted in November 1884 a tentative agenda calling for an exhaustive discussion into the ways of promoting widow remarriage.[1] When the Conference assembled on 31 December 1884 participation, for reasons unknown, was limited to graduates while non-graduate reformers, as Raghunatha Row and Viresalingam, were invited as guests. Another surprise was the decision to broaden the programme of the Conference to incorporate other important issues such as female education and infant marriage. Three main resolutions were passed, viz. that every graduate should promote female education; that infant marriage should be discouraged; and graduates should support virgin widow remarriage and signify this in writing. The last resolution proved highly controversial, and was only carried after an attempt was made to defer it for future consideration.[2]

In December 1885, the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association convened a second gathering in Madras City, and on this occasion there was no restriction on reformers who wished to participate. While urging the government to amend the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, this Conference devoted itself almost exclusively to a discussion of the

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1. The Athenaeum and Daily News, 12 December 1884.

2. The Madras Times, 5 January 1885.

methods that ought to be employed in advancing the reformist cause. The idea of popular lectures to educate public opinion found a ready support in the Conference. The reformers were equally anxious to enlist the support of the pundits, and it was resolved to hold more regular discussions with them to find common ground. The delegates also decided to appeal to teachers in colleges and schools to preach the aims of the Conference to their students. Nor was the importance of example and precedent overlooked, and 'influential' Hindu leaders were urged to set the pattern of behaviour which the community at large might advantageously imitate.[1]

With Indian politicians finding their national platform in the Congress, there was mounting pressure for a similar platform to voice the sentiments of the social reformers in the country. For some years, especially between 1885-7, the advocates of social reform pressed for the discussion of their issues by the Congress. This demand, however, found little support within the ranks of the Congress leadership which was anxious not to endanger the cause of national unity by introducing contentious social reformist issues into its agenda. With the Congress leadership remaining adamant, the argument for a distinct organization to advocate social reform began to gain strength. In November 1887, The Hindu suggested a practical way of organizing a separate meeting to discuss social reform:[2]

> This meeting will be informal and will be attended by such of the delegates as take an active interest in social reform. In

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1. Ibid., 28 December 1885.

2. Cited in Supplement to The Indian Mirror, 13 November 1887.

> this way the occasion of the Congress, when influential and leading men from all parts of India meet, will be utilized to discuss social topics without the Congress, which is or ought to be purely a political gathering, pledging itself to any course.

The suggestion was accepted and the National Social Conference was inaugurated in December 1887 to formulate measures for 'the improvement of the status of our society and of our social usages.' Like the Congress, the National Social Conference soon inherited an organization, with committees representing the various communities being set up in important Indian centres.[1] In Madras itself, the Hindu Committee of the National Social Conference was formed in December 1888, with Madava Row as President and Raghunatha Row as Secretary.[2] Although this Committee became the focus of reformist activity in Madras, the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association continued to fulfil its limited role of promoting widow remarriages. In April 1889, the latter's name was changed to Hindu Marriage Association of Madras,[3] but there were still apparent defects in the reformist movement which led The Hindu to plead for 'a social Congress, with another Hume to devote his intelligence, health and wealth to its success.'[4]

III

Almost simultaneously, as the reformist cause was gaining momentum during the 1880's, another development, in the shape of Hindu revivalism,

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1. The Madras Standard, 9 January 1888.
2. The Indian Mirror, 26 December 1888.
3. The Hindu, 4 May 1889.
4. Ibid., 7 May 1889.

was gradually spreading its influence in South India. With the emergence of the British Raj, and the consequent withdrawal of state patronage from Indian religions, Hinduism suffered a heavy blow and began to retreat in the face of Islamic and Christian encroachment. The introduction of western education, and its rapid expansion during the second half of the nineteenth century, weakened further the position of Hinduism. Educated Hindus, having imbibed the teachings of western philosophers and scientists, either criticized or became sceptical of their inherited religious and social traditions.[1] Hinduism, deprived of much of its intellectual and material succour, came to be increasingly identified with decadent customs, meaningless ceremonies and outmoded prejudices. Observers noted 'the visible signs' of the waning vitality of Hinduism, especially in the crumbling temples, the corrupt priesthood and factious temple committees.[2]

Discerning observers in Madras, while conceding that Hinduism had fallen from its past granduer, were far from convinced by the argument that it had plunged into an inexorable path of extinction. 'History is always repeating itself,' said a writer in 1871, 'and the day is probably not very far distant when a great religious revival - a shaking of the dry bones of Hinduism - shall occur. The form and direction of the renewed religious activity lie in the uncertain future.'[3] Hindu thinking in Madras, while conscious of the need to restore Hinduism to

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1. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, Development of Religion in South India, (Madras, 1963), p 136.

2. Report on the Census of the Madras Presidency, 1871, I, (Madras, 1874), p 107.

3. Report on the Census of the Madras Presidency, 1871, I, p 107.

a state of vitality, was divided as to the best means of attaining it. One school of thought advocated a rationalization of the religion, abolishing caste with its 'childish doctrines' of contamination,[1] and reducing the emphasis on ritualism and outmoded customs. Another school of thought sought its panacea in a return to the glories of ancient Hinduism. R. Sivasankara Pandiah,[2] for example, argued that 'a rich legacy' was stored away in ancient Hinduism that could be utilized for modern needs. 'We have the precious stones of social and moral truths at our very doors. We have only to dig them up.' He criticized the 'neophytes' for pursuing 'novelty for novelty's sake' and regarding 'everything new as productive of benefits, and everything old as productive of evils.'[3] This plea for a return to the past, which represented probably the first manifestation of Hindu revivalism in Madras, found a strong stimulus during the early 'eighties in the activities of the Theosophical Society.

Founded in New York in 1875 to promote the cause of 'Universal Brotherhood' and the study of Aryan science and religion, the Theosophical Society shifted its base of operations to Bombay in 1879 and, ultimately, to Madras City in 1882. The leaders of the movement, both in their lectures and writings, extolled the virtues of ancient India

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1. The Madras Times, 31 August 1878.

2. R. Sivasankara Pandiah (? -1899), a Gujerati Brahman, having taken an Arts degree in 1875 became a teacher in Pacheappah College, a position that he retained until 1888 when he established the Hindu Theological High School. A competent Sanskrit scholar, he spent his leisure hours compiling readers on Hindu religion and morals. The Madras Mail, 16 February 1899.

3. The Hindu Excelsior Magazine, I, No. 7, pp 194-7.

while decrying the materialism of modern Europe. It was H.S. Olcott who largely breathed a new sense of pride among Hindus for their past achievements in science, philosophy and religion. He regarded Sanskrit as a veritable storehouse of knowledge, rated highly the value of the Vedas which he believed to be 'the repository of the highest thought of archaic man, the spring source of all subsequent philosophies',[1] and lauded India's ennobling values, for its respect of private rights and for the cultivation of 'domestic virtues.' At the same time, he attacked Western civilization and warned Indians that it was steadily engulfing the country, making her children 'materialistic' and spreading 'religious scepticism.' Olcott's plea to arrest this 'denationalization' found ready response in South India, where Sanskrit schools were started, societies for the promotion of Aryan morals established, and Hindu religious literature disseminated through catechisms and tracts.

The foundation of Sanskrit schools in various parts of the Madras Presidency constituted one attempt to translate Olcott's teaching into practice. In Madras City, Theosophists and Hindu leaders co-operated to launch a Sanskrit school in September 1883, and it was followed by three other schools in different parts of the city.[2] The mofussil centres did not take long to imitate the example of the metropolis. In Nellore, a Sanskrit school was started in October 1883 by Hindu officials and pundits. In Madura, an endowment of Rs 50,000 by a wealthy Hindu merchant enabled a 'Vedic and Sanskrit school' to be launched in

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1. Supplement to The Theosophist, III, February 1882, p 6.

2. Ibid., V, June 1884, p 90.

1885.[1] Similarly, in Bellary, Vizianagram, Guntur and Trichinopoly, Sanskrit schools sprang up in rapid succession, mainly under the auspices of the Theosophists.

In certain areas, the forces of Hindu revivalism found expression in the formation of societies for the propagation of Hinduism. In Madras City, for example, the Hindu Preaching Society was organized in 1881 partly to wage 'a defensive warfare' against Christian missionaries and partly to propagate the true principles of Vedic religion. To achieve its aims, this body engaged professional preachers, mostly Tamil scholars, issued tracts on Hinduism, and published a regular periodical. By 1888, it had established a number of branch bodies in the mofussil and secured the patronage of certain ruling houses and zemindars.[2] In Tinnevelly, on the other hand, the Aryan Forefather's Society performed a similar function. Founded in 1882 to vindicate 'the memory of forefathers', this body sought to redeem Hindus from the trough of 'moral and spiritual rottenness' into which they had sunk. Pamphlets were published revealing India's past achievements, and imitation of European ways and habits were denounced. Attempts were also made to arrest the conversion of Hindus to Christianity, with Hindu preachers being employed to neutralize missionary propaganda.[3]

With Hindu Revivalism in Madras gaining strength and organization, it began to assume gradually the mantle of militancy, and this was

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1. Ibid., VI, March 1885, p 6.
2. Cited in The Indian Mirror, 18 December 1888.
3. Supplement to The Theosophist, IV, October 1882, pp 2-4.

revealed in the so-called 'Christian College Disturbance' of April 1888. A Brahman student in this leading missionary college of South India, wishing to embrace Christianity, had taken shelter in a missionary's house fearing 'personal violence.' His fellow-students, believing that conversion was contemplated without his parents being informed, urged the College authorities to postpone baptism. Although the request was conceded, the students carried their protest a stage further by criticizing the methods of teaching scripture in the College. The College authorities rejected these complaints, but when one class began to misbehave by 'uproariously and persistently impeding work', they decided to take disciplinary action. This sparked off a 'disturbance', with a 'riotous throng' filling the corridors of the College, while some students 'mobbed' the professors. For this 'organised mutiny', the College authorities expelled two students believed to be the ringleaders. The expulsion was the signal for a student boycott of classes, but the College authorities refused to readmit the expelled students.[1] Intervention by Ananda Charlu and Chentsal Row on behalf of the expelled students also failed,[2] and the students were gradually forced to call off the boycott and return to their classes. The College authorities believed that the incident was 'stirred up by outsiders', but The Hindu held the College teachers 'guilty of a discreditable conduct' in criticizing Hinduism and for not pursuing a more conciliatory attitude towards students involved in the affair.[3]

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1. The Christian College Magazine, V, 1887-8, pp 872-5.
2. The Hindu, 7 May 1888.
3. Ibid., 2 May 1888.

The excitement caused by the Christian College incident gave the leaders of Hindu revivalism the long-awaited opportunity to lay the foundations of the Hindu Theological High School. Much of the initiative to embark on this project came from Sivasankara Pandiah, while the necessary financial backing was provided by certain wealthy Hindu merchants in the metropolis. Among the first to join the Theosophical Society, Sivasankara Pandiah was deeply stirred by its 'strong and rational advocacy' of the truths of India's ancestral faiths and by the impetus that it had given to the study of Sanskrit. He enrolled himself as a 'holy' volunteer in the cause of India's 'moral and spiritual regeneration',[1] and soon emerged as a leading spokesman of Hindu revivalism in Madras, dedicated to the ideal of restoring Hinduism to its 'original purity' as practised 'in the earliest times of the noble sages of Aryavarta.' As a religious reformer, he remonstrated against the evil practices that had crept into Hinduism, some of which had 'an immoral tendency' while others reduced the faith to 'ostentation and noisy frivolity.' He found popular Hinduism 'clouded by pernicious rites and ceremonies', having surrendered 'the admirable simplicity' that it once possessed for 'meaningless formalities.' In calling for a return of Hinduism to 'its pristine glory', Sivasankara Pandiah advocated a revival of the 'more simple forms of worship', less obsession with 'such insignificant formalities of religion as caste-marks' and the cleansing of religious institutions of the 'scourge' of temple women and vagrants so that they might be restored as the 'seats of Hindu theology

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1. The Madras Times, 30 December 1890.

and philosophy.'[1] He also urged spiritual instruction in schools, especially as the existing system of education was 'turning the cream of the younger generation into a set of atheistical or irreligious, conceited, selfish, disobedient and immoral youths.'[2] Since 1882, he had made a modest start in this direction by establishing moral and religious classes to teach students 'the general principles of Hinduism on a non-sectarian basis.'[3] Five years later, he founded the Hindu Tract Society to 'spread Hinduism and to defend it against the attacks of its opponents.' Besides distributing tracts, this body engaged preachers to deliver lectures on Hinduism in the mofussil.[4] However, neither the mere publication of occasional tracts nor the 'stray moral classes' wholly met the ends he had in view. What he wanted was something 'truly substantial and effectual', and he conceived the idea of a Hindu Theological College, founded on the model of the great missionary colleges in India, in which both secular and religious instruction would be imparted. The 'commotion' in the Madras Christian College provided him with a rare opportunity to fulfil his dream.[5]

In May 1888, Sivasankara Pandiah announced the establishment of the 'Hindu Theological College Fund', designed to raise money to build 'a National College' in Madras City 'to impart both secular and religious

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1. Ibid., 24 October 1890.
2. Ibid., 9 July 1888.
3. The Theosophist, X, June 1889, p 541.
4. The Madras Times, 18 March 1890.
5. The Theosophist, X, June 1889, p 541.

instruction.'[1] In an attempt to mobilize support for the scheme, he appealed to the latent Hindu sensitivity to Christian proselytization. He ascribed the recent incident in the Madras Christian College to 'the gross insult offered to Hinduism by the bigoted Missionary Professors',[2] and warned Hindus that the Christian missions were 'moving heaven and earth to convert our co-religionists to their religion.' While calling all Hindus 'to rally round the standard of Hinduism',[3] he suggested certain practical ways of successfully resisting missionary encroachment. Among his proposals was the plea to reduce the exposure of Hindu youth to the proselytizing influence of missionary institutions by starting independent Hindu schools and colleges.[4] With the government steadily withdrawing from secondary and higher education, his appeal for funds to establish an Hindu Theological College carried greater conviction as well as a sense of urgency.

Although generously supported by some wealthy merchants in the metropolis, the realization of the scheme demanded equally liberal support from the other sections of the Hindu community if the estimated amount of Rs 500,000 was to be raised. To Sivasankara Pandiah's disappointment, Hindu opinion was divided between the merits of his scheme and the desirability of raising the Pacheappah College into a first-grade institution. The latter proposal had many supporters, including the Trustees and the Principal of the College.[5] With opinion

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1. R. Sivasankara Pandiah, The Duties of the Natives of India to their Rulers and their Country, (Madras, 1888), pp 15-6.
2. The Hindu, 7 May 1888.
3. The Indian Mirror, 13 May 1888.
4. Ibid., 19 May 1888.
5. The Indian Mirror, 9 September 1888.

divided, a public meeting was convened in May 1888 to discuss the rival proposals. Attended by Madava Row, Raghunatha Row and Ananda Charlu, the meeting resolved that it was more expedient to strengthen Pacheappah College than to embark on a scheme without assurance of funds.[1] Though a blow to Sivasankara Pandiah's hopes, this decision did not weaken his resolve to proceed with his scheme. About Rs 31,000 was raised by September 1888, and in January 1889 a modest start was made by inaugurating the Hindu Theological High School at 'the very centre of the Hindu quarter' of the metropolis.[2] Instruction was given at primary and secondary level, and in 1894 a total of 347 students were enrolled in the school.[3]

The foundation of the Hindu Theological High School, while reflecting an Hindu awakening 'to a sense of their educational and religious responsibilities',[4] also revealed that aspect of militancy which Hindu revivalism in Madras was beginning to assume. Exploiting the existence of a certain anti-missionary feeling, Hindu revivalism found nourishment in the campaign that it began to wage against Christian missions. In Trichur, for example, the Hindu Amriksha Sabha resorted to street preaching in 1889 to frustrate the activities of the local mission. The missionaries were denounced as 'foreign' agents, and the Sabha's successful 'bloodless crusade' led to the closure of two mission schools in the town.[5] In Conjeeveram, the annual Hindu festival of 1889 proved

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1. The Hindu, 16 May 1888.
2. The Madras Times, 17 January 1889.
3. The Hindu, 9 September 1894.
4. The Madras Mail, 16 November 1889.
5. The Madras Times, 24 October 1889.

to be the scene of 'a rather rough encounter' between Hindu preachers and European missionaries, with the latter finding 'their own weapons' being used against them. 'In the old days', observed the Madras Standard, 'the combat was between the trained missionary and the untrained masses from whose ranks would step out some champion whose knowledge and debating prowess were not all commensurate with his zeal ...Now things are changed. Hinduism closing up its ranks meets the assault with striking contrast to the past.'[1] This 'new style of warfare' caused anxiety among the missionaries, who feared that it might rouse 'prejudice and ill-feeling in their worst forms' and even induce the 'youth to practise all manner of rudeness and bravado.'[2]

In contrast to the European missionaries, the social reformers in Madras appear to have had no early misgivings about the aims or activities of the revivalists. Some of the reformers, notably those of the 'traditional school', took the view that revivalism would aid the cause of reform by inculcating the true doctrines of Hinduism. Raghunatha Row, for example, saw in revivalism a means to restore the 'golden age' of India when the conduct of the Hindus was guided by the Shastras.[3] He was an active member of the Theosophical Society, supported the scheme for a National College, and founded the Association for the Propagation of True Religion in 1886 to encourage the study of the Shastras.[4] The Hindu, also an advocate of social reform, regarded the

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1. Cited in The Hindu, 23 May 1889.
2. The Madras Mail, 28 September 1889.
3. The Madras Times, 31 December 1888.
4. The Madras Standard, 16 April 1886.

revivalist movement as 'the result of a generous spirit of improvement, a general renaissance, that is rapidly permeating the whole Hindu mind.' Far from being opposed to social reform, the paper believed that Hindu revivalism was essentially a purifying movement, 'waging war against blind superstition and scepticism', and adapting Hinduism to meet the challenge of a changing situation.[1] Whether the reformers were entertaining any ideas of a partnership with the revivalists is not clear, but their patronage of revivalism yielded small dividends indeed when the Age of Consent Bill controversy was heatedly debated in 1890-1.

IV

The appeal for state help to effect reform, the ultimate weapon in the armoury of the Indian reformers, was made in earnest in August 1884 when B.M. Malabari's 'Notes' on 'Infant Marriage in India' and 'Enforced Widowhood' were published. A well-known Bombay journalist, Malabari portrayed in graphic terms the evils arising from these practices. Much of what he said about the nature and consequences of these practices was familiar in India, at least in reformist circles, but the remedies that he suggested had an aspect of severity, if not of novelty, about them. Although he did not seek 'a legal ban' against infant marriage, a practice which he felt contributed largely to the problem of widowhood, Malabari wished the government to show its disapproval of the practice by barring after five years married students from colleges and giving preference to unmarried applicants in the public service.[2] He

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1. The Hindu, 21 May 1888 & 23 May 1889.

2. Government of India, Home Department, Selections from the Records, No. ccxxiii, Papers relating to Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood in India, pp 3-4.

also solicited a similar 'interposition of authority [of the state] to a small extent' to break down the restrictions that caste and orthodoxy had imposed on widow remarriage. Priests were to be deprived of the power of excommunicating widows seeking remarriage, while protection was to be given to widows protesting against enforced seclusion or other disabilities that Hindu customs inflicted on them.[1]

Reformers in Madras, while admitting the existence of the evils which Malabari complained of, had serious reservations as to the wisdom of invoking state intervention in social questions. Raghunatha Row asserted that in principle 'anything connected with Hindu religion should not be interfered with by the Government.' Social reforms, he felt, should be a product of internal growth and not of British legislation, and should 'come from within and not from without.'[2] S. Subramania Iyer, while echoing these sentiments, warned that legislation would 'retard than promote progress', a danger which weighed heavily with many reformers. P. Chentsal Row, for example, argued that social legislation would lead to 'no beneficial results' and, indeed, might 'shake the confidence of the people in the neutrality of Government in religious matters and create a reaction in favour of the very evils which it is our wish to repress.'[3] Reactions from reformers elsewhere in the country were equally hostile to state intervention, and there was 'an almost unanimous consensus of opinion that the time for legislative

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1. Ibid., pp 5-7.

2. The Madras Times, 11 March 1885.

3. MPP, Vol. 2595, September 1885, No. 2249, S. Subramania Iyer to Government of Madras, 5 January 1885; P. Chentsal Row to Government of Madras, 15 January 1885.

interference has not yet come.'[1] Hence, the Indian Government had little option but to reject Malabari's plea, though expressing willingness to consider legislation against proven social evils if such legislation had been 'asked for by a section, important in influence or number, of the Hindu community itself.'[2]

Although Malabari's proposals failed to gain general support, they did nevertheless elicit replies from a wide range of reformist and official sympathizers. Some of these replies were an exercise in finding more realistic and feasible remedies to the evils afflicting Hindu society. Expectedly, much attention was given to the question of state intervention, and an attempt was made to define those areas within which the state could legitimately and with safety intervene. The mainstream of reformist thinking, however, was divided between the merits of banning infant marriage and raising the age of consent. A number of leading Indian reformers, including Malabari, Madava Row and Raghunatha Row, favoured some kind of official action against infant marriages. Another group of reformers, like K.T. Telang, believed that reform was 'most urgently called for in regard to the time of consummation, and not so much in regard to the time of marriage.' Presumably anticipating opposition to 'external' interference, Telang argued that delaying consummation would be 'a reform from within.'[3] It was Maxwell Melvill, Judicial Member of the Bombay Government, who in effect suggested that

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1. W.W. Hunter, 'The Hindu Child-Widow', Asiatic Quarterly Review, October 1886, pp 35-7.

2. Government of India, Home Department, Selections from the Records, No. ccxxiii, Resolution of Government of India, 8 October 1886, p 2.

3. Heimsath, op.cit., p 161.

the age of consent could be safely raised to twelve. Replying to Malabari in May 1886, Melvill claimed that infant marriage was 'not necessarily a bad institution, or at all events not so bad as to render legislative interference desirable.'[1] Instead, he drafted a scheme to amend section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, raising the age of consent from ten to twelve, a proposal that had the 'obvious advantage of not seeking new government interference but rather working within existing statutes.'[2]

The formal discussion of this issue did not take place until the third National Social Conference assembled in Bombay in December 1889, but it had been apparent for some time previously that there would be opposition in the Conference to the idea of state intervention. In a circular that Raghunatha Row issued early in December as General Secretary of the Conference, a draft resolution welcoming legislation to raise the age of consent was listed as the first subject for discussion,[3] but another circular, emanating from Poona, ruled that state interference had been 'definitely abandoned' and urged reformers to achieve their aims without resorting to coercive legislation.[4] When the subject was discussed at the Conference, there was 'an animated debate' verging on 'apparent disorder' before the resolution advocating legislation was endorsed.[5] In forwarding the resolution to the Government of India in

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1. The Indian Spectator, 25 July 1886.
2. C.H. Heimsath, op.cit., pp 160-1.
3. The Madras Times, 18 December 1889.
4. The Hindu, 9 December 1889.
5. Ibid., 20 January 1890.

August 1890, the reformers argued that the proposed reform did not conflict with the official policy of neutrality in such matters:[1]

> What is now sought is not an interference with matters not hitherto regulated by express law, but an amendment of the existing law, as laid down in the Penal Code by the British Legislature, on grounds which, in consequence of a more enlightened consciousness of the dignity of the relation of man and woman and a more vivid perception of the evils of the present law and practice, have commended themselves to a large number of the intelligent population of the country.

Passing formal resolutions on reformist platforms, however, was hardly considered adequate to convince public opinion of the wisdom of invoking state legislation. Hence, reformist leaders in Madras began a determined campaign in the early months of 1890 to rally some measure of popular support for their cause. Among those who took an active part in this campaign was G. Subramania Iyer, who in January 1890 made a powerful plea in justification of social reform and coercive legislation. Voicing largely the sentiments of the 'rationalist school', he argued that 'social reform must advance along with political reform, if, indeed, it is not to precede the latter', especially if the political aspirations of the Congress were to be ultimately achieved. Political independence, he felt, depended on 'the fitness of the people to exercise that power', and would only be conceded after 'a long process of discipline and training' when the nation became 'more sincere, more disinterested, more courageous, and had been elevated to the 'intelligence and moral power' attained by the European countries. The existing 'social customs and institutions' in India, he believed, were 'entirely opposed to the development of these great qualities', and he urged

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1. Report of the Fourth National Social Conference held at Calcutta on 28th December 1890, (Poona, 1891), Appendix D.

reformers to remove these social and religious obstacles which lay in the path of the country's regeneration.[1]

In seeking to justify state interference in social issues, G. Subramania Iyer drew freely from the writings of European philosophers, notably Spinoza and T.H. Green. He defined the state as 'a moral and spiritual organism', whose obligations to society were not exhausted by merely providing for the maintenance of law and order:

> The sole end of the State is not merely protection of property, is not merely happiness of people, is not justice (the realization of law); the State lives for something higher than merely keeping men from mischief. Law and justice are a condition of politics more than their end. The true definition of the proper and direct end of the State is the development of national capacities, the perfecting of national life, and finally, its completion.

In brief, he saw the state as an agency 'to raise the moral condition of the nation as well as its intellectual and material condition.' Subramania Iyer, however, was not advocating any carte blanche interference by the state in social matters. Interference, he emphasized, must be 'timely and cautious', within 'some precautions' and should never be directed against 'the liberty of the individual and the liberty of convenience.' Ideally, he would have preferred reforms through education and 'voluntary agencies', but in Hindu society neither of these methods were effective enough to combat 'the tyranny of caste and orthodoxy.' Education, he complained, operated with 'extreme slowness. You cannot convert an ignorant into an educated nation in a year or two.' The voluntary agencies, 'excellent as far as they go', could 'only go a little way and exert very little influence on the enormous mass of ignorance that blocks the way of reform.' Nor was Subramania Iyer

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1. The Hindu, 29 January 1890.

convinced by the claim that state interference must be opposed when the ruling authority was 'alien.' Such an argument, he felt, had force in a society which was 'vigorous and self-working', but not in a society which was like 'a sick man requiring external stimulus to keep him up.'[1]

If G. Subramania Iyer resorted to the writings of Spinoza and Green to fortify his cause, Raghunatha Row appealed in equal earnest to the authority of the Shastras to justify legislation on the age of consent. For some years, Raghunatha Row had been advocating a commission to inquire and report on the Hindu law of marriage and help in the promulgation of a code of Hindu Law founded on the Shastras. However, a decade of agitation failed to persuade the Indian Government and, in the absence of this comprehensive inquiry, he was willing to accept 'piecemeal legislation', such as the Age of Consent Bill, provided its principles conformed to the Shastras.[2] In an effort to remove any misgivings, Raghunatha Row published a pamphlet to demonstrate that the Vedas, the 'highest authority' of the Hindus, weighed on the side of those urging the raising of the age of consent, although prevailing practice among the higher castes was opposed to deferment of consummation of girls till twelve if they had attained maturity.[3]

Part of the campaign in support of the Age of Consent Bill was waged in the press. The Hindu, edited by G. Subramania Iyer, became the strongest advocate of the measure throughout the long months of the

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1. The Madras Times, 1 February 1890.

2. The Madras Times, 10 January 1890.

3. R. Ragoonatha Row, The Hindu Shastrick Aspect of the Question of the Age of Consent, (Madras, 1891), pp 1-6.

controversy, dispelling fears of state interference and rallying the support of the western-educated elite. It dismissed as 'a mere sentiment' the objection to intervention by 'a set of foreigners', especially as social evils were steadily causing 'the physical and moral decay of the nation.'[1] At times, the paper became very critical of the unsympathetic attitude of the English-educated class. In February 1890, for example, The Hindu charged many graduates with utilizing 'their education to selfish purposes, as an instrument to widen the field of their enjoyment, or to open up new prospects of personal success.'[2] The Swadesamitran, also published in the same premises, conducted a similar campaign to win support among the Tamil-speaking population. The advancement of the country, it argued, depended on rooting out 'evil customs, pernicious beliefs, and injurious observances', and this could be achieved only by legislation.[3]

Opposition to the reformist campaign was slow to crystallize, and in its early stages was largely confined to isolated criticism of the reformers and their organs. The Hindu, for example, was accused of taking 'a radical turn' in its treatment of social issues. One critic of the paper charged the editor of displaying 'a spirit of intolerance, a desire to fall foul of the unfortunate advocate of status quo, and even a spirit of sarcastic humour and impatient self-sufficiency.'[4] T. Madava Row, who became involved in a running controversy with the paper,

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1. The Hindu, 26 February 1890.
2. Ibid., 11 February 1890.
3. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, Week-ending 31 August 1890, p 182.
4. The Hindu, 9 October 1890.

criticized the editor for not representing the views of 'the millions who constitute the great bulk of the Hindu community.' The editor, in a spirited reply, argued that if the paper sought to voice popular sentiment 'it must be ready to advocate suttee, infant marriage, trial by ordeal...We are not prepared to do so...The duty of a journal is to educate public opinion as well as to reflect it, and in this country its most valuable function is the former rather than the latter.'[1] By October 1890, when the controversy over state intervention was gaining momentum in Madras, it was claimed that 'such native papers as are advocating Legislative interference with Hindu marriage and other customs, are experiencing a large falling off in their circulation.' The Hindu doubted the authenticity of this story, but Madava Row believed that this was the most effective punishment for any organ which 'too much misrepresents, or misguides, or otherwise misbehaves.'[2]

The fact that The Hindu became a centre of controversy during the Age of Consent Bill debate could be largely traced to the widely held belief in Madras that there had been a radical change of editorial policy ever since the editor, G. Subramania Iyer, decided to remarry his widowed daughter. In 1889, Subramania Iyer's daughter of twelve was widowed before consummation and this placed him in the dilemma of either consigning his daughter to a harsh life of enforced widowhood or of committing the 'unpardonable' offence of remarrying her. After some months of painful soul-searching, he decided on remarriage rather than 'face the life-long misery of a daughter whom he had loved as his own

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1. Ibid., 24 February 1890.

2. Ibid., 25 October 1890.

soul' becoming a victim of a cruel and anachronistic custom. The wedding was celebrated in Bombay in December 1889 on the occasion of the Congress gathering.[1] The orthodox, though refraining from formal excommunication, displayed 'visible signs of silent disapprobation' while many educated Hindus were guilty of 'culpable indifference.'[2] Subramania Iyer's friends and relatives soon deserted him, while 'no priest will minister his family, no servant will enter his household, no Hindoo who is not a Congress-wallah will openly associate with him.' He found this ostracism 'terrible' and it 'killed his wife' in April 1890.[3]

Although opponents of the Age of Consent Bill made much of 'the changed policy' of The Hindu, and by veiled references attempted to implicate the editor for this departure, an examination of the editorial and correspondence columns during this period provides little substance to this charge. Ever since The Hindu was launched in 1878, it had remained a loyal supporter of social reform, although for many years it admittedly believed that reform should be attained by persuasion rather than by coercive legislation. However, in August 1886 The Hindu advocated legislation to raise the age of consent and proscribe the compulsory disfigurement of widows.[4] Three years later, with reformist agitation gaining momentum, the paper adhered to this view and, indeed, even began to advocate legislation to cure other social evils. In December 1889, for example, it called for the abolition of infant

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1. The Hindu, 7 January 1890.
2. The Madras Times, 28 April 1890.
3. The Hindu, 6 February 1891.
4. Cited in The Indian Spectator, 29 August 1886.

marriage and dismissed objections to state interference as 'more or less imaginary.' While accepting official neutrality in social issues as 'a sound principle', The Hindu asserted that this axiom should not apply in India if the government and the western-educated elite were agreed that the evils of any social practice were 'so serious that they outweigh the hardships that legislative interference might produce.'[1]

However, it must be admitted that G. Subramania Iyer was 'unduly aggressive' in his advocacy of the Age of Consent Bill and was guilty of using 'violent language' against those who opposed the proposed Bill.[2] As a sub-editor of The Hindu observed, Subramania Iyer made 'little concession to popular sentiment' either in his writings or speeches.[3] How far this aggressive posture was the result of his personal misfortune and how far it was a reaction to the equally militant campaign of his opponents is difficult to determine, although it is probable that both these factors might have played a part in shaping his attitude on this contentious issue. However, the involvement of The Hindu in a controversy over the Age of Consent Bill, provoking sharp protests from its readers and well-wishers, was a cause of embarrassment to Viraraghava Chariar, the managing proprietor of the paper who had played no inconsiderable part in making it the leading Indian organ in South India. Though a supporter of the Age of Consent Bill, he wanted The Hindu to adopt a more neutral stance and respect the feelings of those who had

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1. The Hindu, 13 December 1889.
2. V. Krishnaswami Iyer's letter to editor, The Hindu, 19 January 1891.
3. Anonymous, G. Subramania Iyer. His life and career, (Madras, 1909), pp iv-vi.

misgivings about state intervention in social questions. In an effort to restore the old editorial policy of The Hindu and scale down the undue emphasis that it was recently giving to social reform, he suggested the idea of 'a separate weekly paper, solely devoted to social and moral reforms.'[1] The proposal was accepted and in September 1890 the Indian Social Reformer was launched, but this failed to remove The Hindu from the centre of controversy during the long debate on the Age of Consent Bill.

By September 1890, it became evident to the reformers that the current of public opinion was flowing strongly against them. What disappointed the reformist leaders was the attitude of the western-educated elite. G. Subramania Iyer, in a speech at the Triplicane Literary Society, asserted that the Hindu leaders were 'running away from the responsibility that the present position had created.' While India was 'becoming weaker from generation to generation' owing to social evils, he complained that enlightened leaders were displaying 'a spirit of evasion, a spirit of explaining away, excusing oneself, a running away as it were from the responsibility of the post.' He reaffirmed his belief in legislation as the most effective way to solve social problems, and dismissed as 'simple nonsense' arguments that state interference would precipitate 'mass rebellion.'[2]

Anxious 'to show to the world the strength of the reform party' and to allay fears that the Age of Consent Bill had produced, a meeting of the metropolitan reformers was convened in October 1890. A special

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1. K. Subba Rao, op.cit., pp 217-9.

2. The Madras Times, 30 September 1890.

effort was made to enlist the attendance of the 'Dravidian social reformers and their leaders' since it was felt that the issue had become of 'great national importance.'[1] The task of explaining the need for the proposed legislation fell upon Raghunatha Row, but his claim that the Bill did not interfere with Hindu marriage customs did not convince some of his audience. Some dissentients called for a special committee to consider the entire question, contending that popular opinion should be consulted before embarking on legislation. Other dissentients denied the very existence of the evil which the Bill sought to alleviate, and argued that the Bill would lead to 'inquisitive inquiries'into delicate family matters. Despite spirited opposition, the meeting welcomed the raising of the age of consent to twelve.[2]

The opponents of the Age of Consent Bill were not slow to demonstrate their feelings on this question. A preliminary meeting, 'to concert measures for holding a public meeting of the people of Madras', was held at the residence of Madava Row in November 1890. Attended by some of the 'distinguished pleaders, officials and educationists', including Somasundram Chetty, Sundram Sastri and Mahomed Mahmud Nizamuddin, the meeting resolved that 'it is not desirable that the Legislature should raise the Age of Consent.' A small committee was appointed to convene a 'meeting of sympathisers' in which a protest memorial to the Indian Government was to be adopted.[3] The Madras Times described the event as 'the spectacle of a few "old men" in the city',

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1. The Hindu, 11 October 1890.
2. The Madras Times, 14 October 1890.
3. Ibid., 18 November 1890.

and urged them to play 'the nobler part of bowing to the inevitable.'[1] Raghunatha Row remarked that the participants in the meeting 'should be either ignorant of their religion, or be pandering to the prejudices of their co-religionists.'[2] This criticism brought an immediate retort from Madava Row, who announced his resignation from the National Social Conference - a gesture strangely reminiscent of his resignation from the Madras Standing Congress Committee in April 1890 after the controversy over the Cross Bill.[3]

The demonstration against the Age of Consent Bill took place on 6 December, a week later than originally planned, attended by the leaders of both factions. With feelings running high, and tension heightened by the fact that the supporters of opposing sides had filled the Pacheappah Hall 'almost to suffocation', there were ominous signs of a major showdown. Stalemate resulted: the meeting did not even adopt a single resolution. After a brief speech from Somasundram Chetty, the chairman, Madava Row moved the first resolution protesting against the Age of Consent Bill as 'being unnecessary so far as this Presidency, at all events, is concerned.' He described the Bill as 'a gigantic deception' and 'the most preposterous ever heard in old Asia.' As the British were 'a just, wise and considerate Government', he felt constrained to warn them 'against the covert designs of a batch of so-called Social Reformers even microscopically inappreciable.' 'An imperial race', he said, 'should not trust such shallow reformers backed by a few, stray,

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1. Ibid., 19 November 1890.
2. Ibid., 26 November 1890.
3. The Madras Times, 27 November 1890.

vindictive outcastes.' When he 'spoke contemptuously and too personally of Mr. Malabari and Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Row', interruptions started and Raghunatha Row demanded the right to reply.[1] Madava Row refused to yield, contending that it was a meeting of 'sympathizers.' With the chairman helpless, and other speakers mounting the platform, the meeting degenerated into 'one of uncontrollable disorder and rowdyism' and had to be adjourned without completing the agenda. The meeting, according to the Madras Times, 'could hardly have been more rowdy than this.'[2]

Each party blamed the other for the unhappy spectacle that occurred in Pacheappah Hall. The opponents of the Age of Consent Bill laid the responsibility on the reformers, claiming that the latter should not have attended a meeting convened to protest against the Bill. The reformers, in their defence, asserted that the circular announcing the meeting invited 'the General Public of Madras', and as such their views deserved to be heard as much as those of their opponents. There was, however, little difference of opinion as to what was the immediate cause of the uproar. Madava Row's frontal assault on the reformers, his misrepresentations of their motives and conduct, turned a tension-charged meeting into 'a fiasco.' Indeed, as one discerning spectator of the event observed, the meeting only left tarnished reputations:[3]

> Consequently, beyond giving an opportunity to some zealots of the Hindu Tract Society to cry at the top of their voices that the Church was in danger and utter disrespectful remarks against worthy men...beyond furnishing an opportunity for

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1. The Hindu, 8 December 1890.
2. The Madras Times, 8 December 1890.
3. Ibid., 8 December 1890.

> Rajah Sir T. Madhava Row to dig a grave for the interrment of his reputation, and beyond supplying an enjoyable half-hour of popular excitement to youngsters, the meeting did no good whatever to anybody.

The opponents of the Age of Consent Bill, not easily discouraged by the events of the first meeting, convened a second meeting on 18 December to record their protest against the measure. While admitting 'the evils of early consummation', the meeting resolved that such instances were too rare in Madras to warrant preventive legislation.[1] A similar protest meeting was also held by the Muslims in the metropolis on 14 December, but the Triplicane Literary Society, after protracted discussions among its members, decided to welcome the Bill. In a memorial to the Indian Government, it suggested amendments to reduce the scale of punishment and to make it a 'non-cognisable offence, unless death or grievous hurt should result.'[2]

This breach over the Age of Consent Bill, evident among the metropolitan leaders, was also apparent in the mofussil. In the great majority of the mofussil centres where the issue was discussed at public meetings, notably Salem, Palghat, Coimbatore, Masulipatam, Tanjore, Mayaveram and Chingleput, resolutions were passed opposing the Bill. Support for the measure only came from Cocanada, where Norton's speech appears to have persuaded the audience to accept the measure, provided that amendments were introduced on the lines suggested by the Triplicane Literary Society.[3]

The Indian-owned press in Madras was equally divided on this issue.

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1. Ibid., 19 December 1890.
2. The Hindu, 24 November 1890.
3. Ibid., 5 March 1891.

In the metropolis, the principal supporters of the Age of Consent Bill were the trinity of Mount Road publications, viz. The Hindu, the Swadesamitran, and the Andhra Prakasika. In the mofussil, the Bill was welcomed by the Kerala Patrika and the Kerala Sanchari, the two well-known Malayalam weeklies of Calicut. The great majority of the other newspapers opposed the measure, including almost every Urdu paper in the Presidency. Although agitation in the press started during the early months of 1890, it only reached its peak in the weeks immediately preceding the enacting of the Bill in March 1891, at a time when agitation on the platform had virtually ceased.

Indeed, a final opportunity to discuss the issue at a platform passed in December 1890 when the Congress and the National Social Conference met in Calcutta for their annual sessions. The Hindu, despite its past opposition to social issues being discussed in the Congress, advocated the inclusion of the Age of Consent Bill on the grounds that it was not merely a social question but one which affected the welfare of all classes and creeds.[1] W.S. Caine, who arrived in Madras early in December 1890, 'almost passionately appealed to his native friends in Madras' to raise the issue in the Congress as he feared that any attempt to shirk it would 'very seriously discredit' the body 'in the eyes of all Englishmen' and endanger the claims for political concessions.[2] The Madras deputation was converted but the Subjects Committee, 'though overwhelmingly in favour of it personally', refused to depart from its past policy of not discussing social

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1. The Hindu, 29 December 1890.

2. Ibid., 27 January 1891.

questions.[1] If the reticence of the Congress was understandable, the attitude of the National Social Conference perplexed many reformers in the country. Despite the wishes of the Madras delegates, the Conference decided to omit any reference to the Age of Consent Bill for fear of precipitating an open conflict. The Hindu, aghast at this silence 'on the burning question of the hour', protested that the Conference should have recorded its verdict on the issue irrespective of the consequences.[2] It accused many Congress leaders of countenancing the Conference 'chiefly because it serves as a convenient device to the Congress' in its effort 'to support the contention that the political Congress is as mindful of social improvement as improvement in our political condition.'

By January 1891, when the controversy had attained unprecedented dimensions, the Age of Consent Bill was discussed in the Supreme Legislative Council. Voicing the misgivings of those opposing the measure was Romesh Chunder Mitter, who warned the Council that the Bill was 'likely to cause widespread discontent in the country.'[3] The Hindu accused Mitter of becoming 'the mouthpiece of the uneducated masses',[4] and criticized his speech as 'not quite worthy of him.' This raised a cloud of controversy in Madras, and sparked off a fresh burst of protests against The Hindu. P.S. Sivasamy Iyer, while expressing his support for the Bill, protested against the editor having 'used so strong a language and indulged in an attack on one of our most distinguished countrymen.' V. Krishnaswami Iyer, a member of the Madras

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1. Ibid., 6 March 1891.
2. Ibid., 7 January 1891.
3. C.H. Heimsath, op.cit., pp 171-2.
4. The Hindu, 21 January 1891.

Standing Congress Committee, remonstrated strongly against the 'objectionable' way in which The Hindu dealt with those who disagreed with its views. While regretting that the Bill had not received the objective treatment that it deserved owing to the strong feelings that it had roused on all sides, he reserved his position about the measure so long as its 'obnoxious provisions' remained and the 'necessary safeguards' were not incorporated in the Bill.[1]

With the Congress leaders deeply divided on this issue, and the angry exchanges between the supporters and opponents showing no signs of abating, Hume felt compelled to intervene. In a public statement in January 1891, he denied that the Congress was opposed to the measure. Except for Lower Bengal, Hume claimed that 'the great majority of the Congress party' supported the Age of Consent Bill, a view that was also shared by E. Norton who asserted that 'a major portion of his native friends' were supporting the measure.[2] However, in his communications with the Viceroy, Hume emphasized the need for certain amendments in the Bill to 'throw oil upon the troubled waters' and 'sweep away the great mass of those angry and embittered feelings' that the measure had caused in the country. As 'a golden bridge for all parties', he advocated Mitter's suggestion that puberty rather than an age-limit should be prescribed as the age of consent, but he withdrew this proposal subsequently claiming that his 'party' would not accept it.[3] Lansdowne

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1. Ibid., 19 January 1891.

2. Ibid., 24 January 1891.

3. Lansdowne Papers, Correspondence with Persons in India, January-June 1891, Nos. 166 & 170, Hume to Lansdowne, 12 February and 14 February 1891.

saw little reason to compromise, neither convinced by Hume's suggestions nor impressed by the weight of opposition, and in March 1891 the Supreme Legislative Council passed an unamended Age of Consent Bill.

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The Age of Consent Bill controversy had important consequences for the reformist movement in South India. To the supporters of the Bill, the controversy served to emphasize the need to reappraise their aims and strategy in the light of recent events. What was significant was the dispelling of the long-held belief that the western-educated elite would be loyal to the reformist cause. Far from displaying any capacity to take 'a more liberal and more rational view of things than are the pundits and masses', the controversy only 'brought to the surface the amount of stolid conservatism and the mischievous spirit of false patriotism that animate a majority of the educated Hindus.'[1] The ambivalent attitude of the Congress on this issue also caused disillusionment. By its decision to exclude the issue at the 1890 session, it roused scepticism among reformers who had always assumed that it was sympathetic to the cause of reform. The Hindu warned that not only English sympathizers but many Indians would 'out of sheer disgust' be compelled 'to wash their hands of a movement which has so little sincerity and moral force about it.'[2] Indeed, in March 1891, The Hindu went as far as to advocate the dissolution of the alliance between political and social

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1. The Hindu, 11 February & 21 May 1891.

2. The Hindu, 3 February 1891.

reformers and the formation of 'two distinct political parties.'[1]

This process of reappraisal of the aims and strategy of the reformist movement also undermined the alliance between the 'traditional' and 'rationalist' wing of reformers. This alliance had been forged during the early 'eighties, largely for reasons of expediency, with the leadership and policy being vested in the hands of the 'traditional school' of reformers. However, the Age of Consent Bill controversy brought the 'rationalist' wing more into the forefront, and it even displayed some impatience with the leadership and the established methods of social reform. Led by such activities as G. Subramania Iyer, K. Subba Row, sub-editor of The Hindu, K. Natarajan, managing proprietor of the Indian Social Reformer, and A. Subba Row, lecturer in the Madras Presidency College, the 'rationalist' wing had launched the Indian Social Reformer in September 1890 to wage a powerful campaign in support of the Age of Consent Bill and expose some of the social evils of Indian society. Dissatisfaction against the methods of the 'traditional' wing came to be openly expressed. In March 1891, for example, The Hindu asserted that what was needed was 'moderate but steady reform' guided by 'the suggestions of science and reason' and 'without looking to shastras or any writings of ancient personages for authority or sanction.'[2] K. Natarajan, while deploring the tendency to look for 'the Golden Age in the past for Aryavarta', held Raghunatha Row 'to some extent responsible for giving the fiction a good deal of its

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1. Ibid., 26 March 1891.

2. Ibid., 26 March 1891.

plausibility.'[1] In February 1892, discussions began among the members of the Hindu Marriage Association of Madras to define afresh 'the fundamental principles of the Association',[2] but they failed to find a common ground whereby the two wings of the reformist movement could continue the former policy of co-existence and partnership.

The inevitable split came in August 1892 when Raghunatha Row refused to partake in a symbolic dinner given on the occasion of a widow remarriage. The 'rationalist' wing 'openly rebuked' him, claiming that he was in duty bound to attend as President of the Hindu Marriage Association.[3] Raghunatha Row, stung by growing criticisms of his leadership, challenged those opposed to the Shastras to form their own reformist organization.[4] The challenge was accepted and in November 1892 the 'rationalist' wing broke away to form the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association. The emergence of this body, while ending the long hegemony that the 'traditional' wing had enjoyed, also symbolized a more radical break with Hindu tradition on the part of the reformers. The new reformist programme reflected a desire to promote social efficiency, equality and national advance at all levels rather than to regiment society on the lines laid down by the Shastras. Outmoded social usages like as infant marriage, nautch-going and caste were fearlessly denounced. At the same time, the reformers pledged to encourage widow remarriage, inter-dining among sub-castes, overseas travel and female

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1. The Hindu, 26 December 1891.
2. Ibid., 1 March 1892.
3. Ibid., 18 August 1892.
4. Ibid., 30 August 1892.

education by aiding those who take 'practical steps' and by 'personal example.' The emancipation of the down-trodden classes also found a place in the reformist programme, while the new body pledged to work towards the 'gradual amalgamation of Castes.' Nor were the reformers in any way inhibited in their choice of methods. Both the press and the platform were to be utilized to popularize reform, while state interference was to be welcomed to remove proven and deep-seated social evils.[1]

Opposition to the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association came from the 'traditional school' of reformers and Hindu revivalists. T. Muthusamy Iyer, a reformer of the 'traditional school', complained that the 'rationalist' programme did not adequately recognize 'the national Hindu character' but aimed at 'indiscriminate and short-sighted destruction than a cautious and wise re-construction on an indigenous or national basis.'[2] S. Subramania Iyer, who took a prominent part in the reformist movement during the 'eighties, had similar misgivings about the new reformist organization. In his presidential speech at the National Social Conference in December 1894, he claimed that 'exaggeration and intolerance' among certain reformers was 'retarding rather than advancing' the cause of reform. While expressing sympathy for reforms, he argued that changes must be effected 'gradually, cautiously and in a reasonable and truly patriotic spirit' and, equally important, 'on national lines.'[3] Equally critical of the new reformist departure

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1. The Hindu, 20 December 1892.

2. The Madras Times, 3 September 1894.

3. C.Y. Chintamani (Ed.), Indian Social Reform, Pt. III, (Madras, 1901), pp 169-75.

was Raghunatha Row, who attributed the failure of the reformers to their neglect of the Shastras. Moreover, he felt that reform had become a cover for 'almost all irreligious and vicious acts.'[1] The breach between the 'rationalist' and 'traditional schools' of reformers, despite attempts to bridge it,[2] tended to harden during the 1890's.

However, the mantle of opposing reformist pressures was increasingly assumed by the revivalist groups. The revivalist counterblast harped largely on the 'denationalising' tendency of the reformist programme and the 'revolutionary' methods that were being adopted to achieve social change. The reformers were described as 'atheistical, irreverent and materialistic', rather 'fond of western dress and manners', and attempting 'to undermine their religion, and to pull down the social fabric without trying to reform on national lines.'[3] Moreover, the reformers were charged of trying to effect change by coercive legislation with the active help of an 'alien' government. For their part, the revivalists renounced coercive legislation and expressed willingness to 'wait patiently for few years till the bulk of the community can go along with them.'[4] Unlike the champions of orthodoxy, whose opposition to reform had little rational basis, the revivalists saw the importance of projecting their own ideal of reform on lines that would appeal to the

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1. The Madras Mail, 30 May 1901.

2. In 1894, when the National Social Conference was held in Madras, M.G. Ranade urged both sides 'to make up the quarrel.' Co-operation was secured for the Conference, but the split remained. K. Subba Rao, op.cit., p 241.

3. The Hindu, 26 February & 4 June 1896.

4. The Madras Mail, 2 August 1901.

western-educated elite without alienating their own supporters and the orthodox. Hence, they evolved their own prescription of 'Reform on National Lines.' Never defined with any degree of precision, this formula became an effective weapon to frustrate the reformers by raising 'a cloud of discussion' and bewildering the Hindu public.[1] In January 1904, Hindu revivalism found organized expression with the formation of the Madras Hindu Association. While accepting the less controversial aspects of the reformist programme, the new body was pledged to promote social change 'on national lines in harmony with the spirit of Hindu civilisation' and without endangering 'the unity of Hindu society.'[2]

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, it became evident that the reformers were waging a losing struggle against the forces of Hindu revivalism. To some extent, it was an unequal contest, as external intervention in the shape of Theosophy, and Swami Vivekananda, tended to tilt the balance decidedly in favour of the revivalists. The Theosophists, finding fresh impetus since the arrival of Annie Besant in Madras in 1893, proclaimed their renewed determination to labour towards 'the spiritual regeneration of the country' and to lead the Indian people away from the pitfalls of European materialism. As one reformer lamented, this Theosophist prescription only strengthened the 'spiritual pride' of the Hindus and encouraged them to resist 'the broadening basis of Hinduism, with a bigotry and plausibility of reasoning

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1. The Voice of Progress, I, No. 3, December 1901, p 1.

2. N. Subbarau Pantalu (Ed.), Hindu Social Progress, (Madras, 1904), Appendix B.

unknown to the Orthodox.'[1] Swami Vivekananda's feats in the West, and the strictures that he delivered against the reformers during his visit to Madras in February 1897, also strengthened the revivalist cause. His prescription for reform had a familiar ring in Madras: 'My ideal is growth, expansion and development on national lines.'[2]

The reformist cause was also adversely affected by the radicalism and impatience that its leaders displayed, especially since the Age of Consent Bill controversy. By accepting coercive legislation to effect social change, which was represented as an effort to mobilize the machinery of an 'alien' government against established Hindu usages, the reformers caused general resentment within their community. To many Hindus, this meant the rejection of the voluntary methods of persuasion and conviction, and the revivalists did not hesitate to criticize the reformers as preaching 'the method of revolution.' Similarly, reformist censure of Hinduism for countenancing a variety of social abuses was regarded in revivalist circles as 'unpatriotic.' Nor did the reformist insistence on pledges and personal example make the cause any more popular. During the early years of reformist activity, when much of the energies were channelled towards protesting against social evils than in actively suppressing them, the movement held some attractions to the western-educated elite which showed an 'intellectual adherence to the movement' by swelling reformist meetings. The Madras Hindu Social Reform Association, however, demanded more than a mere

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1. K. Srinivasa Row, Papers on Social Reform, (Madras, 1906), p 70.

2. Swami Vivekananda's Madras Lectures, (Madras, 1897), p 109.

'verbal and intellectual assent',[1] and indeed began to draw a clear distinction between the 'thinking reformer' and the 'courage-of-conviction reformer.' The former was no longer wooed to the cause and often was a target of reformist ridicule, being accused of lacking 'moral courage, self-confidence' and 'leading a double life.' 'The men of light and leading amongst us', remarked G. Subramania Iyer in November 1893, 'are afraid of even talking in private or in public about social reform, because a number of go-ahead young men, as they are called, take talkers to task when their talk is not followed by action or when in their own conduct they show themselves to be wanting in fidelity to their expressed opinions.'[2] Hence, only a handful were pledged to the reformist cause and the movement, as the Madras Mail observed in October 1900, 'had fallen on evil times', while 'conservative reaction' became the order of the day.[3]

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1. The Madras Mail, 31 July 1901.
2. The Hindu, 27 November 1893.
3. The Madras Mail, 3 October 1900.

Epilogue

Political consciousness first emerged in Madras during the 1830's in the shape of Hindu agitation against the proselytizing operations of the Christian missionaries and their official allies. In the early 'fifties, at the time of the Charter inquiry, this Hindu feeling crystallized to give birth to the Madras Native Association which became the main vehicle for the expression of the prevailing discontent against the Company Raj in South India. After almost a decade of active existence, the Madras Native Association retreated into obscurity and the Presidency was left without a recognized political organization for almost two decades.

This phase of political apathy in South India came to an end in May 1884 when the Madras Mahajana Sabha was formally inaugurated. Although the demand for a cohesive political body to voice the interests of the Presidency had been heard for some time, what gave it a sense of urgency and importance were the political convulsions of the early 'eighties caused partly by the unpopular rule of Grant Duff and partly by the determined and organized campaign of the Anglo-Indian community to frustrate the policies of Ripon. The new forces that these political convulsions released in the country also resulted in the foundation of the Indian National Congress in December 1885.

The emergence of the Congress provided its leaders in Madras with a singular opportunity to bring the various communal and factional groups in the Presidency under the umbrella of a unified national organization. It was in 1887, on the occasion of the Congress

assembling in the southern metropolis, that this ambitious ideal of political unity transcending caste, creed and class first found fruition in Madras. The Congress of 1887, in the words of Ananda Charlu, 'exhibited the spectacle of a gathering, more considerable in numbers, more representative in composition, more adequate in the proportion of the Muhammadan contingent, more cordial in feeling, /and/ more in unison with the name of this institution!' [1] It was also in these years that the Congress leaders in Madras earned a reputation for their organizational ability. According to the Advocate of India of December 1888, 'no Indian Province can excel the Madras Presidency in sober, orderly, and steady work, in the earnestness and unanimity of its public activity, and in the moderation of its methods and aims.' [2]

By the early 1890's, however, Madras had largely forfeited this reputation and the fabric of political unity that had been erected in 1887 had almost collapsed. Indeed, Hume complained during his farewell visit to the southern metropolis in December 1893 that 'there was a reduction in the unity of Counsel among his former friends in Madras'. [3] The reasons that led to the collapse of political unity in South India were partly the emergence of competing communal, caste and regional loyalties, partly controversial issues such as the Cross Bill and the Age of Consent Bill, and partly factional strife among its leaders. The spirit of communal unity that pervaded the Madras Congress of 1887 was not based on stable foundations and during the ensuing years it

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1. Report of the Seventh Indian National Congress held at Nagpur, on the 28th, 29th, and 30th December, 1891, (London, 1892), p 5.
2. Cited in The Indian Mirror, 21 December 1888.
3. The Madras Times, 4 December 1893.

was steadily eroded away, dissolving in the process the Eurasian and Muslim connexion with the Congress. Equally significant was the attitude of the Panchamas, whose support was actively canvassed by the Congress leaders during the early 'nineties. Two Panchama organizations sprang up in the metropolis to advance the intellectual, economic and political interests of the community. The Adi Dravida Jana Sabha, established in September 1892, adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the Congress and welcomed the co-operation of the higher castes to achieve its aims. The Pariah Mahajana Sabha, founded in October 1894 by the less wealthy members of the community, was hostile to the Congress and was opposed to any alliance with the higher castes. It refused to participate in the Madras Congress of 1894, and resisted demands for the Indianization of the administration on the grounds that it would increase the powers of the higher castes. The organ of this body was the Pariah, a weekly, edited by its secretary. This paper regarded the Congress as 'a nothingness or at best a huge debating club', organized by the Brahmans and the higher castes to preserve their 'vested interests'. [1] The Congress demand for simultaneous examinations was dismissed as an attempt 'to brahmanize and babuize the administration', and the Panchamas were warned against 'nursing a serpent with milk'. [2] Rather, the Pariah urged the community to look towards the British rulers for justice and fair play. 'We owe much to the Englishmen; nothing to the

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1. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, Fortnight-ending 15 October 1894, p 367.

2. Ibid., Fortnight-ending 15 January 1895.

Brahmin, whose deeds do not admit of being expressed in negatives.' [1]

In isolating the Brahmans for criticism, the Pariah was largely giving expression to the feeling of mistrust and tension that prevailed between the Brahman and non-Brahman groups. This tension was apparent since the 1860's, and stemmed mainly from the religious, social and economic domination that a small minority exercised over a large, but less fortunate, majority. Owing to their traditional sacerdotal position, the Brahmans were generally regarded with a certain 'superstitious reverence' by the other Hindus who attempted to secure salvation by establishing charities for destitute Brahmans, endowing land to the Brahman clergy, and even educating Brahman students in colleges. Such practices created the impression of an affluent and privileged class living on charity, and stirred up 'a sort of jealous feeling all round that without contributing in any way to the material resources of the country, these Brahmins consume a considerable portion of the produce'. [2] Another cause of tension was the disproportionately high ratio of public posts that Brahmans held in the Madras Presidency. This was, to a large extent, an inevitable sequel to their intellectual pre-eminence although, to some extent, Brahmans in certain areas used their influence for family and caste aggrandizement. The non-Brahmans tended to attribute their backwardness 'to the intrigues and machinations' of the Brahmans, and from time to time protested against alleged

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1. Cited in The Madras Mail, 25 October 1894.

2. The Hindu, 18 June 1890.

Brahman malpractices. In 1885, for example, there were complaints that the district administration in Anantapur was dominated by Mahratta and Madhwa Brahmans and it was claimed that non-Brahmans had been denied their legitimate share of public appointments. [1] Despite a conscious attempt on the part of European officials to widen the basis of recruitment to the public service, animosities between Brahmans and non-Brahmans tended to intensify during the 'nineties owing to the growing competition for the limited administrative spoils that were available. Another underlying cause of friction between Brahmans and non-Brahmans was the former's insistence on preserving intact the established religious and social system. 'The Brahmanical system', observed a social reformer in 1903, 'holds the country still in its grip. It has succeeded in subordinating the national mind completely to its sway.' Some reformers, while tracing 'the countless restrictions, numberless severities, and religious bigotry' to the Brahmanical influence, demanded changes 'to strip the Brahmin of the weapon of torture or oppression'. [2] There was a concerted agitation by reformers, both Brahmans and non-Brahmans, to rationalize the Brahmanical system and erect 'an edifice suited to the modern requirements of justice and humanity', a demand that was resisted by the vast majority of Brahmans on the grounds that it was 'tending to level them down' to the position of the other caste groups. [3]

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1. Ibid., 16 February 1885.

2. The Madras Times, 13 June 1884.

3. K. Srinivasa Row, op.cit., pp 78-80.

The Hindu warned that if the Brahmans did 'not look sharp and, realizing the spirit of the times, take non-Brahmans also into their confidence, they will be reformed out of existence'. [1]

During the 1880's this conflict between Brahmans and non-Brahmans did not enter the mainstream of South Indian politics mainly because the hostility of the Anglo-Indians compelled Indian leaders to present a united front against what was regarded as a common enemy. By the 'nineties, with a diminution in Anglo-Indian enmity, rivalries between Brahman and non-Brahman leaders became more evident on political platforms. Affected by this conflict was the Congress organization in Madras. In Calicut, for example, 'the ill-feeling existing between the Brahmans and non-Brahmans' in September 1894 reduced the Congress sub-committee there to impotence and endangered the collection of funds for the movement. [2] In some areas, the preponderance of the Brahman element in the Congress committees created resentment among non-Brahmans and led to allegations that these bodies were being used as instruments of Brahman aggrandizement. Another area of conflict between Brahmans and non-Brahmans was in the elections for the local boards and the Madras Legislative Council. In 1902, a Congress leader in Bellary asserted that such elections 'often excited the feeling of Brahmin versus non-Brahmin'. This rivalry, he claimed, was becoming widely prevalent throughout the Presidency and assumed such 'lively forms of hatred and vengeance' that the interests of the people were being sacrificed. [3]

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1. Cited in The Indian Mirror, 15 July 1888.
2. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, Fortnight-ending 15 October 1894, p 354.
3. K. Srinivasa Row, op.cit., p 63.

One consequence of this rivalry between Brahmans and non-Brahmans was the emergence of regional and linguistic separatism. The cry 'Travancore for Travancoreans' which was commonly heard during the 1890's drew its motive force from the Malayali antagonism to the supremacy that Brahmans from Madras had long enjoyed in the administration of the state. After some years of sporadic protests in the press, the dissident Malayali leaders presented in July 1891 a formal memorial to the Maharajah of Travancore. The main burden of their complaint was 'the denial to them of a fair share in the government of the country and their systematic exclusion from the higher grades of its service'. It was asserted that between 1817-72, Travancore had been ruled by 'a series of foreign Dewans' who had 'without exception not only introduced their relations, castemen and friends into the State, but tried their best to oust the Nairs and prevent them from filling any of the higher appointments'. Statistics were produced to show 'the comparatively small share /of public appointments/ the truly native portion of the population is forced to be contented with' while foreigners, notably Tamil and Mahratta Brahmans, were enjoying a virtual monopoly of the important and lucrative posts. The memorialists protested against foreign Brahmans being allowed 'to play the Englishmen' in Travancore, and urged the adoption of the policy of the European officials in Madras to regulate the influx of Brahmans into the public service. The Maharajah was asked to give preference to 'natives' who by their toil and labour 'mainly contribute to the resources of the State', while foreign applicants, whether for public service or for the bar, should

only be recruited if they had a working knowledge of Malayalam. [1] In Mysore, on the other hand, a similar agitation originated largely from the Canarese Brahmans in opposition to recruitment of Tamil and Telugu Brahmans from Madras. In 1883, when a Madras Brahman was elected Dewan, 'the local influential clique of Iyengars' raised the cry of 'Mysore for Mysoreans' and charged the British Resident with 'being the great importer of foreigners into Mysore'. [2] Over the next decade, there were sporadic outbursts in the press against the Dewan, invariably accusing him of showing 'too great a regard for self-interest' and being 'too much attached to his countrymen and relations' in the distribution of state patronage. [3] Though the precursor to what later emerged as the movement for linguistic autonomy, this agitation in Travancore and Mysore was neither well enough organized nor had sufficiently a coherent programme during the nineteenth century to be effectively harnessed to gain the main ends that its sponsors had in view.

Even less articulate at this time was the movement demanding linguistic autonomy within the multilingual Madras Presidency. Separatism among the Malayalis of Malabar was for many years obscured by the agitation started in Travancore, while the dispersal of the Canarese population in small pockets in the northern districts of the Presidency seemed to have discouraged separatist tendencies among them during the nineteenth century. However, neither of these factors operated in the case of the Telugus, the largest single linguistic

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1. The Madras Times, 8 July 1891.
2. Ripon Papers, Correspondence with persons in India, January-June 1883, No. 115, J. D. Gordon to Ripon, 22 February 1883.
3. Report on Native Newspapers in the Madras Presidency, Fortnight-ending 31 May 1893, p 128.

group in the Madras Presidency and mainly concentrated in the northern districts of the Presidency. For much of the nineteenth century, the Telugus remained a backward community in relation to their Tamil neighbours, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the Northern Circars. The Telugu leaders, with some justification, attributed their backwardness to official neglect arising from the geographical isolation of these districts from the metropolis. N. Subba Row, who for many years represented the predominantly Telugu Northern Group in the Madras legislature, complained in July 1895 that the Northern Circars, though they formed a third of the area of the Presidency and abounded in natural resources, had not received the amount of official attention that it deserved. While aware of their 'isolated position', he stressed with regret that neither in education nor in communications did these districts bear comparison to the Tamil districts.[1] In practical terms, this cast the Telugus in a position of general inferiority to their Tamil neighbours, and the latter exerted their advantage by assuming positions of dominance in the everyday life of the Presidency. The public service and the bar became the preserves of the Tamils, while in the conduct of the political affairs the Telugus were often compelled to play a secondary role to their more advanced neighbours.

From their position of relative isolation and backwardness, the Telugu leaders deduced the necessity for a separatist movement. Language, however, provided the chief emotive and binding force of this movement, and no group was more aware of its importance than the Telugu students who migrated to Madras City to complete their

1. The Hindu, 9 July 1895.

collegiate education. Wedged in between the advancing tide of English language and the mass of Tamil-speaking population, the Telugu students were faced with the danger of losing their linguistic and cultural identity. To avert this, language and cultural societies were organized. One such society was the Andhra Bhashabhi Vardhani Samajam, launched in June 1895 to advance the use of the Telugu language.[1] Of greater political significance was the formation of the Circars Union in September 1897 by the Telugu leaders resident in the metropolis, designed 'to promote among them a spirit of brotherhood, to train them in the methods of organization and corporate action, and to create in them an interest in the affairs of the Circars'.[2] An awareness of regional identity was also fostered in the Northern Circars by the convening of district conferences during the 'nineties. Especially significant was the fact that the initiative to hold such annual conferences was taken by these relatively backward districts, with Krishna taking the lead in July 1892, followed by Godavary in May 1895 and Vizagapatam in May 1897. Though admittedly organized to express local grievances, it was nevertheless significant that the popularity of these conferences in the Northern Circars increased at a time when these districts were 'rather indifferent to the Provincial Conferences' that were held under the auspices of the Madras Mahajana Sabha.[3] With these Telugu districts pursuing an independent line and showing a diminishing interest in the activities

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1. The Madras Times, 13 June 1895.

2. The Hindu, 8 September 1897.

3. Ibid., 22 April 1899.

of the southern-based organizations, it became evident that Telugu separatism was beginning to take roots in this multilingual Presidency.

Competing communal, caste and regional loyalties were not the only factors straining the fabric of political unity which the Congress was attempting to build in South India. Even more disruptive during the 1890's was the emergence of such contentious issues as the Cross Bill and the Age of Consent Bill. Of these two issues, the former led to the estrangement of Madava Row and the elder group of politicians from the Congress. Though this rupture was caused by genuine differences of opinion on the elective question, it was also a conflict between age and youth and between leaders who had achieved distinction in the public service and those who had acquired reputation by virtue of their labours in journalism and political organization.

Far more disruptive was the controversy over the Age of Consent Bill as it produced the first significant breach within the tightly-knit 'inner circle' that had exercised political authority in Madras and had borne the brunt of discharging the affairs of the Madras Mahajana Sabha and the Madras Standing Congress Committee. This inner circle sprang largely from a younger generation of western-educated Indians who had shared common experience during college days and had emerged in the early 'eighties as a cohesive and influential group to resist the pressures of the Anglo-Indians and expose the administrative blunders of the Grant Duff regime. It was this inner circle that had launched the Madras Mahajana Sabha in May 1884, having enlisted the co-operation of the mofussil leaders, and it also provided Hume with loyal support in his crusade to establish a

national organization in 1885.

The Age of Consent Bill had a baneful effect on the solidarity of this inner circle. Nowhere was its disruptive influence more apparent than in the affairs of The Hindu, the recognized organ of this political group. Both its editor, G. Subramania Iyer, and managing proprietor, M. Viraraghava Chariar, belonged to this inner circle and had played a prominent role in provincial and national political life since the early 1880's. Though men of rather different temperaments, they had been 'intimate friends' since their college days and by their dedication and consistent espousal of the cause of Indian political advancement they had emerged as 'the trusted tribunes of 35 millions of the people of the Madras Presidency'. However, the Age of Consent Bill proved 'an apple of discord' and shook the very foundations of their long-established friendship. Since this upheaval, differences between them 'began to grow in intensity every day, and at times would find vent in bitter and vindictive abuse of each side'. Intervention by friends was of no avail, and in September 1898 the partnership of twenty years was dissolved, with Viraraghava Chariar assuming proprietorship of The Hindu and Subramania Iyer becoming the sole owner of the Swadesamitran. [1]

Another disruptive influence on the solidarity of the inner circle during the 1890's was Eardley Norton. Ever since he joined the Congress in 1887, Norton had emerged as a colourful, if rather controversial, personality in South Indian politics. Endowed with courage and great talents, his writings in the press and his vigorous speeches at

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1. K. Subba Rao, op.cit., pp 180-3.

Congress platforms had proved a potent factor in stirring up political enthusiasm in Madras and popularizing 'the Western methods of obtaining political privileges'. [1] Not unnaturally, Norton was regarded as 'the brightest light in the Benighted Presidency' [2] and became a prominent member of the inner circle in Madras. In December 1893, he was elected Joint Secretary of the Madras Standing Congress Committee, and a few weeks later was chosen to represent Madras in the Supreme Legislative Council. Hardly had the euphoria of this triumph passed away when a charge of adultery was instituted against him in the High Court. Norton admitted the charge and reached a settlement out of court, agreeing to resign his seat in the Legislative Council and not to contest again until his personal problems had been resolved. [3]

This incident cast a cloud over Norton's political career, especially his continued participation in the Congress. The inner circle in Madras was divided as to what attitude it should adopt. One faction, being exponants of social purity, wanted Norton to retire from active political life, at least for a period of time. Another faction, perhaps out of loyalty to a friend, resisted this idea and even accused some of Norton's opponents of scheming 'with the object of paying off old scores'. [4] With Madras playing host to the

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1. The Hindu, 21 September 1903.
2. The Madras Standard, 14 November 1888.
3. The Madras Times, 11 April 1894.
4. The Indian Social Reformer, 12 January 1895.

Congress in December 1894, it became apparent that the question of Norton's participation was heading towards a controversy. Norton's supporters, determined to have their way, secured in September 1894 his nomination to the Congress Reception Committee. The rival faction was equally determined to oppose Norton's participation. Hence, when the Congress assembled on 26 December, a protest was made against the inclusion of Norton's name in the Subjects Committee, but it was overruled. On the following day, when Norton rose to move a resolution, Miss Muller, a Theosophist, challenged his right to speak on the Congress platform. When the President rejected this protest, a number of the Congress delegates staged a walkout. [1] This incident gave rise to a heated debate and created 'a split' among the Congress leaders in Madras. [2] Among those who resigned in protest from the Congress was S. Subramania Iyer, a member of the inner circle, and closely identified with the Congress since its foundation in 1885. This episode culminated in the resignation of Norton as Joint Secretary of the Madras Standing Congress Committee in May 1895.

Despite his withdrawal from the Congress, Norton's shadow continued to hang over Madras politics for almost another decade. In February 1896, when the question of a farewell demonstration to Governor Wenlock was being discussed, Norton exerted his influence to frustrate the idea. The inner circle in Madras was divided on this issue: certain leaders, including Viraraghava Chariar, N. Subba Row and Pulney Andy, supported the idea of a demonstration claiming that Lord Wenlock had 'done a good deal to entitle him to public

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1. Ibid., 29 December 1894.
2. The Madras Mail, 28 July 1898.

recognition'. [1] Opposition to the movement came from Norton, Somasundram Chetty, Rungiah Naidu and G. Paramaswaran Pillay, editor of the Madras Standard, who objected to any public demonstration in honour of Wenlock on the grounds that his rule had 'not given satisfaction to the people'. [2] Norton also became a centre of controversy when he emerged from political retirement in July 1898 to contest a seat in the Madras Municipality. Norton's supporters waged a strong campaign and achieved a decisive electoral victory. The campaign, however, stirred up old animosities and revived the past divisions within the inner circle in Madras. In May 1899, Norton presided over the thirteenth Provincial Conference, and three months later was elected to the Madras Legislative Council. His long and chequered political career ended in 1903 when he relinquished his seats in the Municipality and the Legislative Council.

Amidst these communal, caste and factional conflicts of the 1890's, the enthusiasm and vigour which characterized political activity during the preceding decade suffered a visible diminution. In November 1890, The Hindu complained of 'a slackness in the working of the machinery' of the Congress. 'Every Province is dull just at the moment. Madras used to be praised for its systematic and energetic work. But this year she will not quite deserve that credit.' However, Hume's return to India at this juncture encouraged the hope that 'there will be renewed activity in the Congress work'. [3] These expectations proved to be misplaced for in December 1891, The Hindu

1. The Hindu, 20 February 1896.
2. Ibid., 10 March 1896.
3. Ibid., 1 November 1890.

conceded that the 'first enthusiasm for the Congress has apparently cooled down, and we seldom hear now of meetings, pamphlets and so forth to popularise the Congress programme or to enlist the sympathy of the masses to advance the work'. [1] Similar admissions also came from other sources. Ananda Charlu, writing in The Hindu in November 1893, complained that Madras had suffered 'a relapse into its old traditions of insular apathy' and was creating the impression that 'the energy of 1887 was but a spasmodic out-burst, which (as is natural) was followed by a re-action, with its attendant evil of immobility and diminished and diminishing warmth'. [2] No less an authority than Hume testified in December 1896 that there was among Congress workers 'less open enthusiasm and perhaps less activity, than there was in the good old days when our adversaries were rampant and reckless'. With Anglo-Indian opposition to the Congress becoming less and less vocal, Hume believed that the Congress leaders had begun 'bickering amongst themselves about matters wholly outside the scope of our movement'. [3]

This waning enthusiasm for the Congress was reflected in the difficulties that the Madras leaders experienced in discharging their duties. One persistent difficulty during the 'nineties was the lack of funds. The financial burdens of the Congress had greatly increased since the formation of an agency in London in 1887 and the costs had to be met by fixed contributions of the various provincial committees. The Madras Standing Congress Committee evolved a scheme whereby the burden was distributed equally among the various district sub-committees, but 'spasmodic efforts' on the part of the latter

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1. The Hindu, 1 December 1891.
2. Ibid., 25 November 1893.
3. Ibid., 18 December 1896.

frustrated this scheme and interrupted annual remittances to London. In 1891, the Madras Standing Congress Committee decided to sanction the appointment of professional agents in every district to 'popularise the Congress cause as well as to facilitate the collection of funds from each District'. While calling the district sub-committees to meet their allotment, the Madras Standing Congress Committee warned that failure to do so would result in the expulsion of the offending districts from the movement and would 'entail loss of the right to elect delegates to the Congress'. [1] This threat did not have the desired effect, and in January 1894 there were complaints of 'dilatoriness' on the part of Madras in meeting its annual contributions.[2] The collections for the Madras Congress of 1894 helped to discharge the debts, as well as leave a surplus of Rs 21,000, [3] but a few years later Congress finance in Madras returned to its former precarious state. Besides funds, the other problem that confronted Madras leaders was to find delegates to attend the annual meetings of the Congress, especially when they were held in the more distant Indian cities. In 1899, for example, the absence of many Madras leaders at the Lucknow Congress was 'severely criticised in the Congress Circle'. The Hindu regarded this censure justified, and it charged the elected members of the Madras Legislative Council with having 'failed to show a proper sense of responsibility by remaining so supremely indifferent

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1. The Hindu, 4 July 1891.
2. The Madras Times, 19 January 1894.
3. Records of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, Proceedings of the Congress Reception Committee meeting of 6 February 1896, p 127.

to matters connected with the Congress at Lucknow'.[1] The Swadesamitran accused many Congress leaders in Madras of having 'fallen prey to laziness' and becoming 'suddenly afflicted with illness and domestic troubles' at the time when the Congress met.[2]

Equally affected by this prevailing spirit of 'lethargy and relapse' was the Madras Mahajana Sabha. During the mid-1880's, this body had achieved prominence by convening conferences to discuss provincial and national issues and by its efforts to bring the widely dispersed mofussil organizations under its umbrella. The emergence of the Congress, however, reduced its importance with some of its functions assumed by the Madras Standing Congress Committee. The idea of annual provincial conferences was abandoned, and even those held at less frequent intervals were poorly attended. In April 1889, when the fourth conference was convened in Madras City, The Hindu complained that the attendance was 'poor' while the discussions revealed 'a want of previous preparation on the part of the speakers'.[3] The paper also expressed regret that the leaders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha 'occupy themselves so exclusively with the business of the Congress, that they allow matters of local importance to be neglected'.[4] Despite the occasional flurry of activity, the Sabha showed few signs of life in subsequent years and in certain quarters

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1. The Hindu, 27 December 1899.
2. Cited in The Madras Mail, 10 December 1900.
3. The Hindu, 23 April 1889.
4. Cited in The Madras Mail, 25 April 1889.

was even dismissed as 'a defunct institution'. [1] In September 1896 it was decided to dissolve the Madras Standing Congress Committee and transfer its functions to the Madras Mahajana Sabha in the hope of infusing 'fresh blood' into the body and avoiding the existing duplication of duties by having two broadly similar organizations. But the change failed to impart any new vigour to the body, and The Hindu claimed in November 1896 that the Sabha was still 'enjoying the pleasure of its sweet apathy'. [2] Although provincial conferences had become an annual event since 1897, the Madras Mahajana Sabha, in the words of John Adam in 1898, was 'much more perfect and efficient ten years ago than now'. [3]

Despite the upheavals of the 1890's and despite the marked regression in the tempo of political activity, Congress leaders in Madras clearly recognized the significant political advance that had been achieved during this first decade of organized and sustained agitation. Firstly, it was emphasized that the Congress and its affiliated organizations had encouraged 'the growth of enlightened patriotism' in the country and break down some of the barriers that caste, creed and language had long imposed over the people. 'The Hindu and Mahomedan, the Parsee and the Sikh', observed the Madras Standing Congress Committee in 1893, 'have been taught to acknowledge the elementary axiom that one common thread of humanity runs through all the composite fabrics of colour, caste, and creed.' [4] The

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1. The Hindu, 3 July 1895.
2. Ibid., 28 November 1896.
3. Ibid., 9 April 1898.
4. The Madras Times, 4 December 1893.

first to accept this belief was the western-educated Indian whose political horizon, as Rungiah Naidu claimed in 1894, was 'no longer his village or district, not even the capital city of his province, but it is now the whole Indian continent'. Though conceding the fact that the Congress had 'lost the attractions of novelty', Rungiah Naidu believed that it had 'lost no portion of its influence on the intelligent classes of the community as the only institution calling into play what resources of public spirit exist in the country and imparting weight and dignity to such non-official opinion.' [1] Equally important, this decade of organized agitation had yielded some important concessions, notably the reform of the Indian legislatures. While discussing the significance of these concessions in 1897, Norton contended that the British rulers were beginning to acknowledge gradually the political advance that the Indians were making, though he felt this recognition was 'by no means voluntary or graceful'. [2] Moreover, the achievements of this brief but eventful decade of political agitation encouraged hopes for the future. 'The change that has come over the people', remarked The Hindu in December 1893, 'during the eight short years since the foundation of the Congress is marvellous, and the new sense of power that strengthens their hearts and the success that has so far crowned their efforts will sustain then in the further exertions to develop into maturity the tender plant of political freedom.' [3]

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1. Report of the Tenth Indian National Congress, pp 10 & 13.
2. The Hindu, 20 November 1897.
3. The Hindu, 2 December 1893.

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This thesis has been based almost entirely upon newspaper sources and records of Indian political organizations. Of the newspapers I consulted, The Hindu provides the best insight into the happenings on the political scene in Madras. Unfortunately, some of its early files have not survived, and I have attempted to fill this gap by drawing generously on the other Madras newspapers, namely the Madras Times, the Madras Mail, the Madras Standard and the Athenaeum and Daily News. I have also made selective use of newspapers published elsewhere in India, notably the Indian Mirror and the Bengalee, both of which provide excellent source material for the study of the early years of the Indian National Congress.

The records of political organizations relevant to this thesis have not proved as substantial as I had hoped. Though most of the published reports and petitions of the Madras Native Association are available, the unpublished minutes and proceedings of this body have not survived. Similarly, the bulk of the unpublished early records of the Madras Mahajana Sabha and the Madras Standing Congress Committee relevant to this thesis have been lost. However, the library of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in Mount Road has preserved two volumes of letters and proceedings concerning the arrangements regarding the Madras Congress of 1894. More fortunate are the records relating to the later years: the reports and proceedings of the Madras Mahajana Sabha and the Madras Provincial Congress Committee affecting the period 1900-25 have largely survived.

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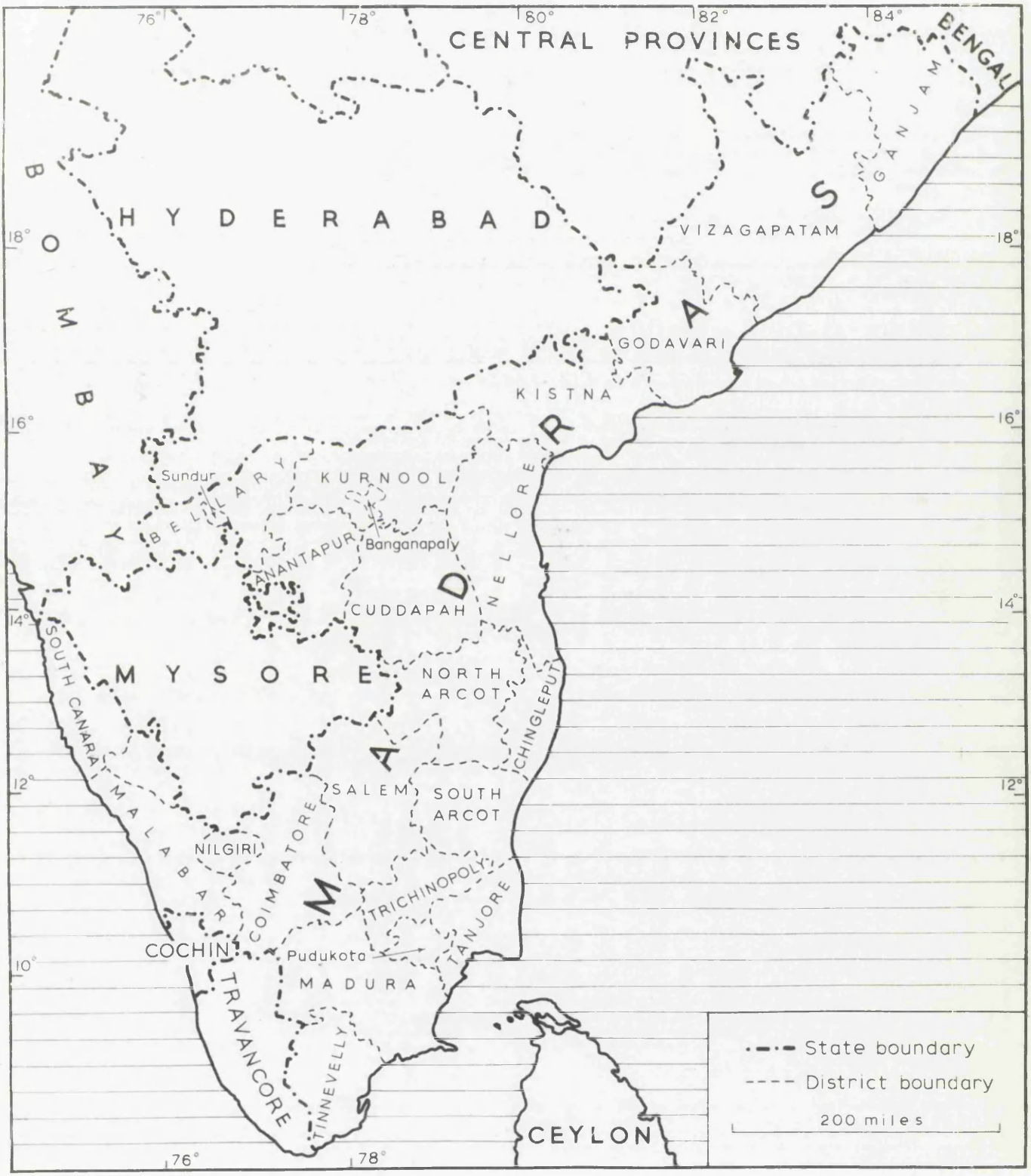
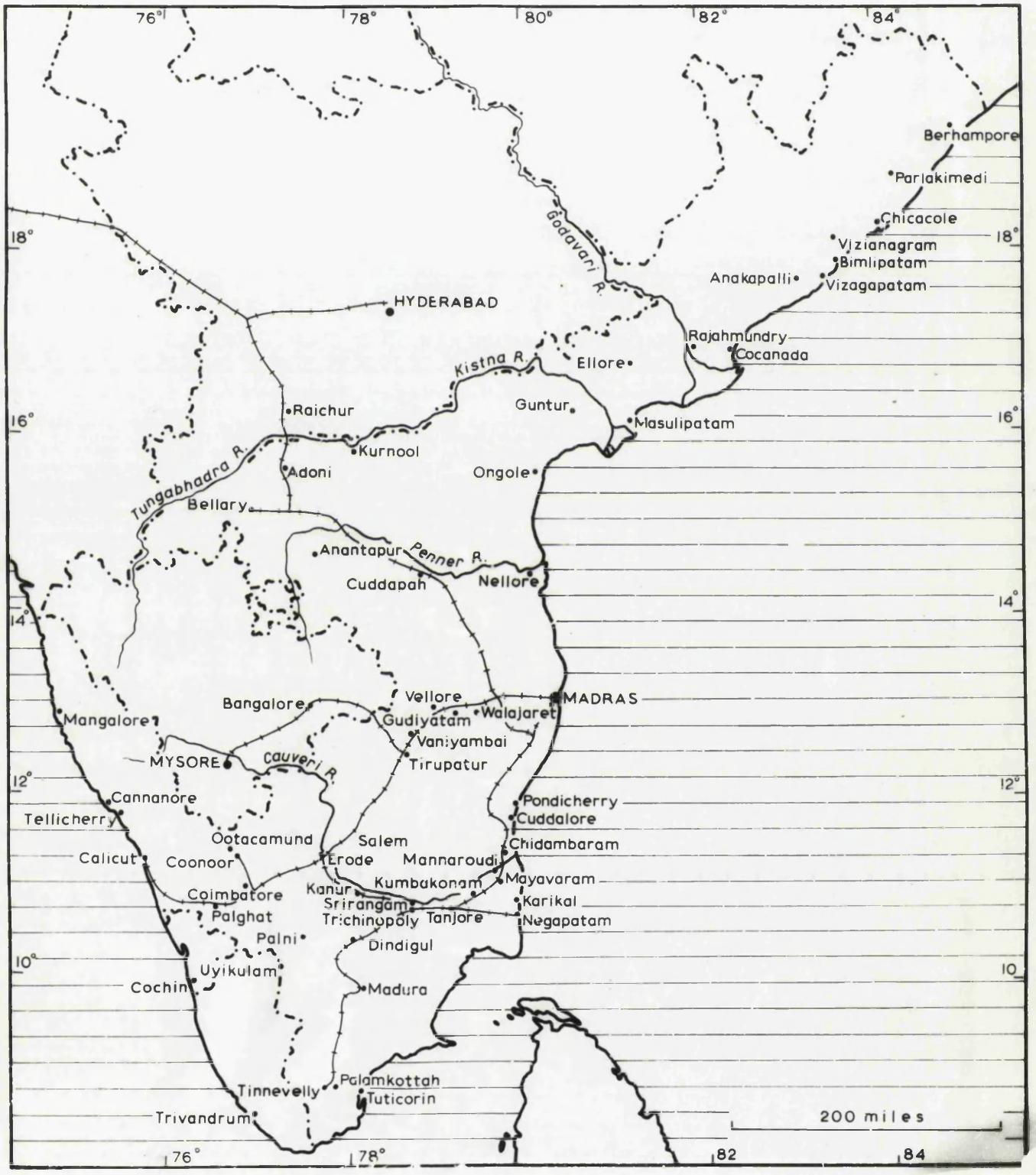


MAP I. Districts of Madras Residency 1886.



MAP II. Municipalities of Madras Presidency, 1886.